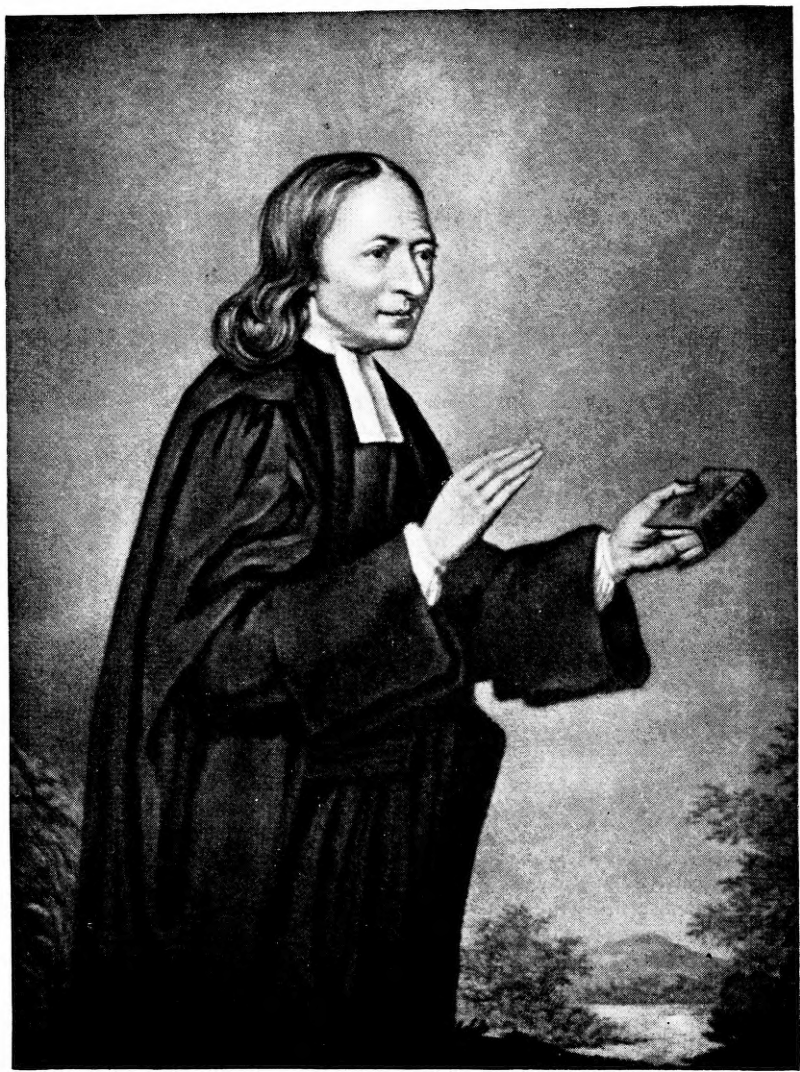




# WESLEY'S STANDARD SERMONS



THE 'PREACHING' PORTRAIT OF JOHN WESLEY

*From a mezzotint by Bland, after the painting by John Russell, R.A., 1773*

# WESLEY'S STANDARD SERMONS

CONSISTING OF FORTY-FOUR DISCOURSES, PUBLISHED IN  
FOUR VOLUMES, IN 1746, 1748, 1750, AND 1760 (Fourth Edition, 1787)

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

## NINE ADDITIONAL SERMONS

PUBLISHED IN VOLS. I to IV OF WESLEY'S COLLECTED  
WORKS, 1771

EDITED AND ANNOTATED BY

EDWARD H. SUGDEN, M.A., B.Sc., LIT.T.D.

*(Master of Queen's College, University of Melbourne)*

## VOLUME I

LAMAR & BARTON, AGENTS  
PUBLISHING HOUSE M.E. CHURCH, SOUTH  
NASHVILLE DALLAS RICHMOND  
SAN FRANCISCO



MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

DEDICATED  
TO THE MEMORY OF MY BELOVED FATHER

**JAMES SUGDEN**

A MINISTER OF THE WESLEYAN METHODIST CHURCH  
FROM 1846 TO 1884

WHOSE LIFE WAS AN EXEMPLIFICATION OF  
MR. WESLEY'S RULE

You have nothing to do but to save souls ;  
Therefore spend and be spent in this work.



## PREFACE

It is remarkable that though John Wesley's Four Volumes of Sermons are part of the standard of Methodist doctrine, and have to be read and approved by all our ministers, no edition of them with annotations has hitherto been issued. I have endeavoured to supply this lack.

The text has been founded on Thomas Jackson's revised and corrected edition of 1825, for which he received the special thanks of the Conference. In its Preface he says, 'Copies of the most authentic editions of Mr. Wesley's Sermons, printed in his lifetime, have been carefully collated throughout, and every effort has been made to present an edition at once complete and correct.' A comparison of Jackson's volumes with the earlier editions, especially with the fourth, issued in 1787-8, proves that Jackson took the latter as the basis of his text, and not the edition of the Sermons published as part of the *Works* in 1771. This is somewhat strange, as he was responsible for the statement that the number of Standard Sermons was fifty-three and that they were those contained in the 1771 edition (see below, vol. ii, p. 336). Stranger still is the fact that in the third edition of the *Works*, published under Jackson's supervision in 1829, the less correct 1771 text was reverted to, and has been used ever since. The most important insertions and alterations now made are enclosed in square brackets, and will be found as follows: Vol. I, pp. 41, 43, 45, 46, 48, 51, 62, 63, 72, 77, 80, 100, 123, 207, 285, 289, 294, 360, 456, 519; Vol. II, 20, 32, 185, 248, 359, 517, 518, 520. In this matter Mr. A. Wallington has rendered me valuable service in comparing the various editions.

The notes include—

(1) Some account of the occasion of the first preaching of each sermon, as far as that could be ascertained from the *Journal* and other sources,

(2) An attempt to show the relation of Wesley's teaching to more modern developments of theology;

(3) Corrections of his exegesis, where the progress of biblical study has made them necessary ;

(4) Identification of the many quotations from classical and English literature which occur in the Sermons ;

(5) Occasional interpretations of words and usages which have become more or less obsolete.

(6) Some indication of the development of Wesley's own views, as shown by differences between the earlier and later sermons.

I am solely responsible for the opinions expressed, and I need hardly say that they have no official authority.

My hope is that this work will attract fresh attention to these wonderful discourses, and cause them to be more widely read and studied. I have found them full of spiritual blessing and stimulus, and I am convinced that it will be of the greatest service to our beloved Church that our ministers and people should recover Wesley's theological standpoint, and should especially be inspired by his passion for souls.

I desire to acknowledge my indebtedness, first of all, to the Standard edition of the *Journal*, and Mr. Curnock's invaluable notes therein contained ; and to the publications of the Wesley Historical Society. Then I have consulted from time to time Tyerman's *Life of Wesley*, with its excellent index, the older and more recent lives of Wesley ; and the various histories of Methodism. Dr. W. B. Pope's *Theology* has always been at my elbow, and Dr. Osborn's monumental edition of the Hymns and Poems of the Wesleys has helped me to identify many of the quotations. I have used the 1872 edition of the *Collected Works*, and also the 1771 edition issued by Wesley. The collection of original editions of Wesley's publications in our Queen's College Library, numbering some 400, has of course been constantly referred to.

E. H. S.

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# OLD AND NEW NUMERATION OF SERMONS

Old	New	Old	New	Old	New
I	I	XIX	XV	XXXVII	XXXII
II	II	XX	<i>XLIX</i>	XXXVIII	XXXIII
III	III	XXI	XVI	XXXIX	XXXIV
IV	IV	XXII	XVII	XL	XXXV
V	V	XXIII	XVIII	XLI	XXXVI
VI	VI	XXIV	XIX	XLII	XXXVII
VII	VII	XXV	XX	<i>XLIII</i>	<i>L</i>
VIII	VIII	XXVI	XXI	XLIV	XXXVIII
IX	IX	XXVII	XXII	XLV	XXXIX
X	X	XXVIII	XXIII	XLVI	XL
<i>XI</i>	<i>XLV</i>	XXIX	XXIV	XLVII	XLI
XII	XI	XXX	XXV	XLVIII	XLII
<i>XIII</i>	<i>XLVI</i>	XXXI	XXVI	XLIX	XLIII
<i>XIV</i>	<i>XLVII</i>	XXXII	XXVII	<i>L</i>	XLIV
XV	<i>XLVIII</i>	XXXIII	XXVIII	<i>LI</i>	<i>LI</i>
XVI	XII	XXXIV	XXIX	<i>LII</i>	<i>LII</i>
XVII	XIII	XXXV	XXX	<i>LIII</i>	<i>LIII</i>
XVIII	XIV	XXXVI	XXXI		

The numbers of the non-standard Sermons are printed in italics.

# INTRODUCTION

## I

### THE STANDARD SERMONS

JOHN WESLEY published four volumes of Sermons, dated respectively 1746, 1748, 1750, and 1760. In 1763 he prepared a Model Deed for his preaching-houses, in which it was provided that persons appointed by the Conference should 'have and enjoy the premises' only on condition 'that the said persons preach no other doctrine than is contained in Mr. Wesley's Notes upon the New Testament, and four volumes of sermons.' This clause must necessarily refer to the four volumes already published. In a second undated edition of the 1750 volume a sermon is added on 'Wandering Thoughts,' bringing the total number up to forty-four. In 1771 he published an edition of his collected *Works*, the first four volumes of which contained the above forty-four sermons (including 'Wandering Thoughts') and nine others, viz. :

XI.	The Witness of the Spirit—Discourse II	dated	1767
XIII.	On Sin in Believers . . . . .	„	1763
XIV	The Repentance of Believers . . . . .	„	1767
XV	The Great Assize . . . . .	„	1758
XX.	The Lord our Righteousness . . . . .	,	1765
XLIII.	The Scripture Way of Salvation . . . . .	„	1765
LI.	The Good Steward . . . . .	„	1768
LII.	The Reformation of Manners . . . . .	„	1763
LIII.	On the Death of Mr. Whitefield . . . . .	„	1770

This makes a total of fifty-three.<sup>1</sup>

In 1787–8 an edition in eight volumes was published, the first four of which were identical with the volumes of 1746, 1748, 1750, and 1760, including the sermon on 'Wandering Thoughts'; but did not contain the nine sermons added in the edition of 1771. After 1787 the form of the words in the Model Deed was altered to 'the first four volumes of sermons.' The text of the present Model Deed

<sup>1</sup> In the present work the above nine sermons are placed after the forty-four, and are numbered XLV to LIII respectively. This numeration is followed throughout. See table opposite.

makes the standard to be ' what is contained in certain Notes on the New Testament, commonly reputed to be the Notes of the said John Wesley, and the First Four Volumes of Sermons commonly reputed to be written and published by him.'

For a long time it was assumed that the Fifty-three sermons in the first four volumes of the *Works* were intended ; but the question was raised by the Rev. R. Green in 1894 as to which sermons really constituted the Standard ; and after obtaining Counsel's opinion, the Conference of 1914 placed on record that the phrase in the Model Deed applies to the first four volumes of Wesley's Sermons, published in eight volumes in 1787-8 ; and that the total number of sermons is forty-four. The case submitted to Counsel, and the opinion of Mr. Owen Thompson, are given below, Vol. II, pp. 331-40.

The legal position is now therefore settled ; but it is interesting to inquire why Wesley introduced the nine additional sermons in the 1771 edition. That he reverted to the original editions in the four volumes of 1787-8 only shows that he realized the legal difficulty that would have arisen had he changed the standard of doctrine set out in the deeds executed before 1771 ; not that he had changed his mind as to the importance of the added sermons. Why then did he add them ? In the preface to the 1771 *Works* (I quote here and elsewhere from a copy of the original edition presented to the Library of our Theological Hall in Melbourne by the late Dr. Osborn in 1870), par. 2, he says ' I wanted to methodize these tracts, to range them under proper heads, placing those together which were on similar subjects and in such order that one might illustrate another. This it is easy to see may be of use to the serious reader, who will then readily observe that there is scarce any subject of importance, either in practical or controversial divinity, which is not treated of more or less, either professedly or occasionally.' His aims were thus elucidation and completeness of presentation. He knew that the previous four volumes formed part of the legal standard of doctrine for his preachers ; and he could not alter that without creating difficulties. Moreover, he had already said in the preface to the volume of 1746, ' I am not conscious that there is any one point of doctrine, on which I am accustomed to speak in public, which is not here, incidentally, if not professedly, laid before every Christian reader.' But the twenty-five years which had passed since their first publication had brought out certain objections, and certain new proofs, in regard to doctrines dealt with in the first editions ; and there was

no reason why he should not in this 1771 edition—which he might reasonably expect to be the last, seeing that he was now in his sixty-eighth year—introduce in their proper place additional sermons, not as changing the standard, but as making clearer and more explicit what was already there. Hence he inserted after the first sermon on the Witness of the Spirit a second discourse on the same subject. Time had shown it to be ‘a grand part of the testimony which God has given’ to the Methodists; the experience of a great multitude had confirmed its truth; the preaching of it had aroused violent and determined opposition; and there had been some dangerous misunderstandings as to its meaning. These points are all dealt with in the second discourse. The strong teaching of No. XI, in which it might seem to be argued that no one who ever committed sin could be called a Christian, needed some qualification; and at its conclusion in the 1771 edition Wesley says, ‘It may easily be observed that the preceding discourse describes the experience of those that are *strong* in faith. But hereby those that are *weak* in faith may be discouraged to prevent which the following discourse may be of use.’ Then is added No. XLVI, on Sin in Believers, and No. XLVII, on The Repentance of Believers, which is the natural corollary of No. XLVI. There was no sermon in the original forty-four treating explicitly of the Last Judgement; hence is inserted for the sake of completeness No. XLVIII, The Great Assize. The next addition to the original list is No. XLIX, ~~The Lord our Righteousness~~, which is inserted, as pars. 6–9 declare, to show the consistency of Wesley’s teaching in 1765 with all that he has said ‘for near eight-and-twenty years’, and to make clear his attitude towards the Mystics, Quakers, Presbyterians, and Independents, and specifically towards Law, Barclay, and Taylor (par. 16). No. L, The Scripture Way of Salvation, is on the old topic of Justification by Faith; but it is especially intended to vindicate Wesley from the charge which ‘has been roundly and vehemently affirmed for these five-and-twenty years’ that he taught sanctification by works (par. iii. 3). In the fourth volume of the *Works*, after including the remaining sermons of the 1760 edition, and the tracts which there follow, he found that he had still about 80 pages to fill, in order to make the volume uniform in size with the first three, which have respectively 350, 354, and 355 pages, he therefore inserted after the sermons and before the tracts, three sermons preached on special occasions, Nos. LI, LII, and LIII, which bring the number of pages up to 353.

A similar consideration serves to show why the Great Assize sermon was placed where it stands (No. XV in the first volume). Wesley wished to make the volumes in the *Works* correspond, as closely as he could, with the four volumes previously published. Now the second volume (of 1748) begins with the sermon preached at St. Mary's, Oxford, on The Circumcision of the Heart on January 1, 1733, as the first had begun with the Oxford sermon on Salvation by Faith; and it includes exactly the sermons in the second volume of the *Works*, excepting No. XLIX, The Lord our Righteousness. Unless The Circumcision of the Heart were put into the first volume, or some other sermon added in its place, the first volume would have been twenty-four pages short, in comparison with the remaining three; by inserting The Great Assize in Vol. I, the pages are made up to 350, and The Circumcision of the Heart is retained as the first in Vol. II. The insertion of No. L (The Scripture Way of Salvation) in Vol. III of the 1771 edition is to be accounted for in the same way; it brings Vol. III up to 355 pages.

Our conclusion, therefore, is—

(1) Nos. LI, LII, and LIII have nothing to do with the Standard of Doctrine:

(2) Nos. XLVI and XLVII are intended as a qualification of the teaching of No. XI, and whilst not part of the Standard, are important as an authoritative interpretation of No. XI; and No. XLV stands in the same relation to No. X.

(3) No. XLVIII is not an addition to the Standard of Doctrine; for its teaching is quite clearly contained in the Notes on the New Testament; but it is intended to secure that the doctrine of the Last Things shall be definitely recognized as part of Wesley's teaching.

(4) Nos. XLIX and L are intended to show that Wesley had not changed his views during the twenty-five years since the publication of the first volume of the Sermons on the questions therein treated.

Therefore, whilst I fully concur in the decision of the Conference of 1914, I have thought it best to include all the fifty-three sermons in the 1771 edition: the earlier additions because they help to interpret the Standard Sermons, and the last three, partly for the sake of completeness, and partly for the special interest of the occasions on which they were preached.

The Forty-four Sermons are given below in the order in which they appeared in the volumes of 1746, 1748, 1750, and 1760, and the remaining nine are placed at the end, and renumbered accordingly.

## II

THE EXACT RELATION OF THE STANDARDS TO THE  
MINISTRY AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE  
METHODIST CHURCH

Methodism had originally no doctrinal test (except by implication) for church, or rather, society membership. 'There is only one condition previously required in those who desire admission into these societies, viz. : "a desire to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins,"' and this is to be proved by their avoiding evil, doing good, and attending upon the ordinances of God. As regards our members, therefore, no doctrinal test is imposed, save in so far as a desire to be saved from sin and the wrath to come, and a saving faith in Jesus Christ, imply certain doctrinal beliefs. But for our ministers, local preachers, and office-bearers certain doctrinal tests are prescribed, and these are safeguarded, first, by the trustees of the churches, second, by the Conference and its subordinate courts, and, third, by the conscience of the individual concerned.

First, then, as to the powers and duties of trustees. The doctrinal standard to which every minister of the Methodist Church is required to conform is legally defined in the Model Deed as follows: 'No person or persons whomsoever shall be permitted to preach who shall maintain, promulgate, or teach any doctrine or practice contrary to what is contained in certain Notes on the New Testament, commonly reputed to be the notes of the said John Wesley, and in the first four volumes of sermons commonly reputed to be written and published by him.' This formula goes back to the original Model Deed prepared by Wesley and incorporated by him in the *Large Minutes*, where the words run: 'Provided always that the said persons preach no other doctrine than is contained in Mr. Wesley's Notes upon the New Testament and four volumes of sermons.' Consequently it is one of the duties of trustees 'to permit no person to preach or conduct worship on the trust property who maintains, promulgates, or teaches any doctrine or practice contrary to what is contained in John Wesley's Notes on the New Testament, and in the first four volumes<sup>1</sup> of his sermons as at present published.'

So far the position is clear. No minister or local preacher can

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<sup>1</sup> Now, as decided in 1914, forty-four sermons.

legally preach any doctrine contrary to the Notes and Sermons (hereinafter referred to as the Standards). No question is raised as to his personal belief; so far as the Model Deed is concerned, he may believe what he likes, provided he does not preach anything contrary to the Standards, and he is at perfect liberty to preach new doctrines, provided they are not contrary to the Standards. As to whether he violates this condition or not, the trustees of the churches are judges, and it is obvious that no further power could reasonably be given to them. They cannot exclude any one from the pulpit on suspicion or even on certainty that he is not orthodox in his *belief*. They can only judge by what he says in the pulpit, and if that is not contrary to the Standards, they cannot take any action.

— The Conference, however, must, and does, go further than this. Every candidate for the ministry must be certified by the superintendent who proposes him that he ‘has read and approves’ the Standards. Before ordination he is required ‘to pass an oral theological examination, including his acquaintance with Wesley’s works, especially the first fifty-three<sup>1</sup> Sermons and the Notes on the New Testament,’ and, further, ‘to be examined as to — his belief in the doctrines of the Church, and to promise that if his views of doctrine change he will quietly retire from the ministry.’ At his ordination he is asked two doctrinal questions—(1) ‘Are you persuaded that the Holy Scriptures contain sufficiently all doctrine required of necessity for eternal salvation through faith of Jesus Christ? and are you determined to teach nothing as required of necessity to eternal salvation but that which you shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scripture?’ (2) ‘I have further to inquire whether you have read the first four volumes of Mr. Wesley’s Sermons and his Notes on the New Testament, and whether you believe that the system of doctrine therein contained is in accordance with the Holy Scriptures.’ Subsequently every minister must answer for himself the question asked annually at the District Synod, ‘Does he believe and preach our doctrines?’

It will be observed, however, that no law is laid down as to what action the Conference shall take in case the answers to any of these questions are in the negative. As the law stands no candidate can be brought forward who does not ‘approve’ the Standards; subsequently inquiry is made annually as to his belief in them, but it is nowhere said that the Conference must remove him from

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

the ministry if his answers are in the negative ; it has apparently full power to deal with each case as it may judge best, provided, always, that the legal requirement of the Model Deed is not violated. At the same time the onus of responsibility is laid upon each individual by his promise that if he changes his views of doctrine he will quietly retire. If, therefore, a minister is clear that his view of any doctrine is contrary to that contained in the Standards, he is bound by his promise to resign, though it would apparently be competent for the Conference to decline to accept his resignation. If, however, his views change, but in such a way that he still believes them to be not contrary to the Standards, he is not bound to resign, though it is in the power of the Conference to examine into his views and to act upon its own judgement accordingly.

The two important questions therefore to determine are: (1) What exactly are the doctrines taught in the Standards in which belief is obligatory? and (2) what is meant by a belief being 'contrary to the Standards'?

As to the first point, the phrases used vary ; the candidate must approve the Standards, the man who is to be ordained is asked whether he believes that the system of doctrine contained in them is in accordance with the Holy Scripture which he has just declared to contain all doctrine required of necessity for eternal salvation ; the ordained minister is asked whether he believes 'our doctrines' ; and it must be presumed that these various phrases—'the doctrine contained in' the Standards, 'the system of doctrine contained in the Standards,' 'our doctrines'—were intended to be practically synonymous, and each phrase must be allowed to throw light upon the others. The second phrase shows that it is the system of doctrine in the Standards, not isolated statements to be found in them, that is intended ; and the third phrase, which Wesley constantly used—'our doctrines'—is defined in the original edition of the *Large Minutes* under question 59 ('What can be done in order to the future union of the Methodists?'), where Wesley suggests that all the ministers should sign an agreement 'to preach the old Methodist doctrines, and no other, contained in the Minutes of the Conference.' Reference to the Minutes shows that these doctrines are justification by faith, entire sanctification, the atonement of our Lord, assurance of pardon by the witness of the Spirit, the impossibility of a sincere seeker after the Truth being lost, and free grace as opposed to predestinarianism.

The eternal punishment of the finally impenitent is also affirmed,



but it is expressly stated that it only applies to those who have heard the Gospel. The phrase 'our doctrines,' therefore, does not mean the whole round of Christian orthodoxy, but specifically the doctrines concerned with sin and salvation, which marked out the early Methodists. And this is the system of doctrine contained in the sermons, as a study of their titles at once demonstrates. Other doctrines are incidentally mentioned, but only these are systematically treated, and it was of these and no others that Wesley was thinking when he demanded from his helpers that they should believe and preach 'our doctrines.' He would never have described the Thirty-nine Articles as 'our' doctrines; they contain the doctrines of the Church of England, and Wesley, of course, accepted them himself; but by 'our' doctrines he meant the Methodist teaching peculiar to himself and his followers at that time in regard to salvation by faith and Christian holiness. That this is so is shown by the fact that two questions are asked in the Ordination Service, if the second question had been intended to cover the whole ground of the Christian faith, it would be unnecessary to ask the first as well. But the inspiration and sufficiency of Scripture is not a specifically Methodist doctrine; it belongs to the whole Protestant Church; and so the question on the system of doctrine in the Standards does not include it, and it is therefore separately asked. 'Our main doctrines,' says Wesley, 'which include all the rest, are repentance, faith, and holiness. The first of these we account, as it were, the porch of religion; the next, the door; the third, religion itself.' As Dr. Fitchett, in his chapter on 'The Effective Doctrines of Methodism,'<sup>1</sup> has said, 'The enduring controversies which have torn asunder the Christian Church lie in what may be called the realm of metaphysical theology. And the working theology of Methodism, since it is supremely occupied with a great cluster of evangelical doctrines, has escaped these controversies.'

John Wesley was a Pragmatist before Professor James had popularized that term. 'His theology,' if I may again quote Dr. Fitchett, 'is one which links doctrine to conduct. It has the salt of reality. Here are doctrines realized in human experience and tested by that experience.' 'Our' doctrines include no such metaphysical theory of the Trinity as is embodied in the Athanasian Creed. 'I dare not insist,' says Wesley in his sermon on the Trinity, 'upon any one's using the word Trinity or Person. I use them myself because I know of none better, but if any man has any

<sup>1</sup> *Wesley and his Century*, pp. 423-34.

scruple concerning them, who shall constrain him to use them? I cannot.' The fact of original sin Wesley strongly maintains, but he expressly disclaims any specific theory about it. 'It is quite beyond my understanding; it is a depth which I cannot fathom.' And, again, 'Some have attempted to explain this intricate affair. I do not commend their wisdom. I do not attempt to explain even how I at this moment stretch out my hand or move my finger.' And in the same paragraph is a profound sentence, applying to much more than this particular doctrine: 'Our perception of truth cannot be false; our understanding or apprehension of things may.' As to the misleading connotation of the phrase 'total' depravity, he says (*Minutes*, 1745): 'How can we maintain that all works done before we have a sense of the pardoning love of God are sin, and as such an abomination to Him? The works of him who has heard the Gospel and does not believe are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done. And yet we know not how to say that they are an abomination to the Lord in him who feareth God, and from that principle does the best he can.' The fact of the atonement shines luminously in every sermon; but there is no attempt to frame a systematic theory even of this great central truth. There is no theory of the hypostatic union of the two natures in our Lord, though the facts of His true deity and perfect manhood are definitely taught.

Every one knows Wesley's profession that he was *homo unius libri*—'a man of one book'; but, as Dr Fitchett has pointed out in the chapter above referred to, 'Methodism is committed to no special theory as to the inspiration of Scripture.' Indeed, Wesley was a critic, both higher and lower, before those much misunderstood terms were invented. In the preface to the Notes on the New Testament he says: 'Those various readings which have a vast majority of ancient copies and translations on their side, I have without scruple incorporated with the text; which I have divided all along according to the matter it contains.' In his preface to the Notes on the Old Testament he declares it to be his purpose 'to give the direct literal meaning of every verse, of every sentence, and, as far as I am able, of every word in the oracles of God. My intention is to make men think and assist them in thinking.' And in the preface to the Book of Joshua he states almost exactly the modern critical view: 'These books (Joshua to Esther) were probably collections of the authentic records of the nation which some of the prophets were divinely directed and

assisted to put together. It seems the substance of the several histories was written under divine direction when the events had just happened, and long after put into the form wherein they stand now, perhaps all by the same hand.' His suggestion that these books may not have taken their present form until after the time of Ahasuerus (the Greek Xerxes) goes as far as anything that the modern critics have suggested. But it is at least clear that the documentary theory of the origin of these books was the one which he adopted.

As to the subject of the final doom of the impenitent, he repeats and applies with the utmost earnestness the Scriptural doctrine of eternal punishment; but he expressly says in one of his latest sermons (on Living without God): 'I do not conceive that any man living has a right to sentence all the heathen and Mahometan world to damnation.' And again: 'I believe the merciful God regards the lives and tempers of men more than their ideas. I believe He respects the goodness of the heart rather than the clearness of the head, and that if the heart of a man be filled with the humble, gentle, patient love of God and man, God will not cast him into everlasting fire because his ideas are not clear or because his conceptions are confused.'

This was the state of the case at Wesley's death; every candidate for the ministry was required to satisfy the Conference as to his belief in Methodist doctrine, but after he had been once received into full connexion, no further inquiry was made unless some charge of failure in orthodoxy was brought against him. But at the Conference of 1812 it was directed that at the annual District Meeting certain questions should be asked in regard to each minister; amongst them being this, 'Does he believe and preach our doctrines?' and in the year 1814 the Conference, feeling the need of more exact definition, made a list of the doctrines to which the 'unequivocal assent' of every candidate for ordination is required. 'A Trinity of Persons in the unity of the Godhead; the total depravity of all men by nature in consequence of Adam's fall, the atonement made by Christ for the sins of all the human race, justification by faith; the absolute necessity of holiness both in heart and life, the direct witness of the Spirit; and the proper eternity of future rewards and punishments.' And in 1827, in consequence of Dr. Adam Clarke's teaching in his Commentary, the doctrine of the Eternal Sonship of Christ was added to the list, and it was directed that every candidate for ordination should be

expressly examined on this point, in spite of Dr. Clarke's protest. 'Such tests of church fellowship and ministerial communion,' he said, 'never disgraced Methodism until now. Mr. Wesley would have abhorred such, as he would have abhorred the devil, whatever attachment he might have had to the general sense of the doctrine.' However, the resolution was passed, and has never been repealed. It was an unfortunate step, taken in a moment of panic, which happily has had no successors, and, I trust, never will.

The actual law, then, is as follows :

(1) Negatively, that it is illegal for any one, minister or layman, to preach in our pulpits any doctrine contrary to the Standards.

(2) Positively, that every minister shall be asked annually whether he believes and preaches our doctrines, the meaning and content of that somewhat vague expression being determined by Wesley's usage and by the list above quoted from the *Minutes* of 1814, plus the Doctrine of the Eternal Sonship of our Lord.

(3) That the procedure to be taken in the event of a negative answer to that question is nowhere determined by our laws, but is left in the hands of the Conference.

(4) That any minister who changes his views on doctrine, presumably in such a way that his new views are contrary to the Standards, is bound by his promise given before his ordination quietly to retire.

It is necessary now to inquire what is intended by a doctrine 'contrary' to the Standards. We must carefully distinguish between 'difference' and 'contrariety.' Things may be different without being contrary. The flower is different from the bud, but not contrary to it. The man is different from the child, but not contrary to him. And so our statements, even of the peculiar Methodist doctrines, may be different from, without being contrary to, John Wesley's. There is a development in doctrine as well as in life, indeed, life without development, whether in Nature or in thought, is inconceivable. For example, the wonderfully enlightening theory of the Atonement worked out in Dr. Scott Lidgett's Fernley Lecture<sup>1</sup> is different from any view that is formulated by Wesley; but it is a development, not a contradiction, of Wesley's teaching. Similarly, the view of eternal punishment which eliminates from it the idea of physical torture differs from that suggested in the Standards, but does not contradict it. The essential deity of our Lord is not contradicted when the voluntary

<sup>1</sup> *The Spiritual Principle of the Atonement*, 1897.

limitations which His humanity imposed upon Him are emphasized more strongly than they are in Wesley's writings.

To deny the legitimacy of such developments is to take our stand with Pius X and the encyclical named with unconscious irony *Pascendi gregis*; we cannot allow that the development of theology ceased with John Wesley, any more than with that prince of theologians, St. Thomas Aquinas. To think such a thing possible comes perilously near to blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, who has been given to guide the Church into all truth, and assuredly did not close His work in 1791 when Wesley died. For this sin there is no forgiveness; the Church that finalizes its doctrines at any point in its history has sealed its own death-warrant.

That Wesley would never have dreamed of blocking by the dead hand of his personal authority all future developments in theology is clear from his own definite statement in the preface to the Sermons 'But some may say, I have mistaken the way myself, although I take upon me to teach it to others. It is very possible that I have. But I trust, whereinsoever I have been mistaken, my mind is open to conviction. I sincerely desire to be better informed.' This is not the language of a man who believes that he has finalized the truth, or who would desire to impose his own conclusions as infallible and unchangeable upon the whole future Church.

So far I have been dealing purely with what may be called 'Statute Law.' But evidently this law needs some authoritative interpretation; for many questions may reasonably be raised as to its precise meaning. Now, such interpretation can only be given by the supreme court of the Church, and, just as the common law of England is absolutely authoritative as an interpretation by the courts of the meaning of the Acts of Parliament, so the decisions of our Supreme Doctrinal Court, the British Wesleyan Conference, must govern our interpretation of our Standards of Doctrine.

Such decisions may be given explicitly, when a charge of want of orthodoxy is made against some minister; as e.g. in the case of Dr. Adam Clarke in 1827 (a summary of all such decisions of Conference would be a valuable addition to our Methodist literature); or implicitly, by publication in such a series as the Fernley Lectures; or by failure to institute proceedings against a minister whose published views do not accord with the hitherto usual interpretations of our doctrines.

Finally, it is of interest to determine precisely what power the Conference has to deal with our Standards of Doctrine. It could not, without an Act of Parliament, alter the provisions of the Model Deed, or permit any doctrine contrary to the Standards to be preached in our pulpits. It has, however, power to define what our doctrines are, as was done in 1814 ; and to decide whether any specific doctrine is or is not contrary to the Standards. It has also full power to determine its own action in the case of any minister who does not believe and preach our doctrines, or any one of them , save that it cannot permit him to preach any doctrine ruled to be contrary to the Standards in any of our trust properties. Assuming that the Conference ruled that a given doctrine was not so contrary, and any body of trustees disagreed with that ruling, the ultimate decision would rest with the Courts of Law, and finally with the House of Lords.

Methodism, then, has on the one hand a very definite body of doctrines to which she rejoices to be bound. ' It asserts the liberty of the moral agent, and indicates the spiritual nature and essential royalty of man. It is very clear as to the atoning work of Christ and the office and work of the Spirit ; it insists on the necessity of personal holiness, and holds out the possibility of a victory over the apostate nature by affirming a sanctification which is entire, and a perfection in love which is not ultimate and final, but progressive in its development for ever. It looks on man as utterly lost on account of sin. But warm and generous as the sunlight of God, it looks every man in the face, and says, " Christ died for you." It preaches the glad news that to every believer in Christ the invited Spirit will come and enthrone Himself in the heart as a witness of Sonship and the living Comforter. It preaches the dreadful truth of eternal punishment, and warns men to flee from the wrath to come ; and it makes known the everlasting blessedness of those who fight the good fight of faith, and obtain the crown of righteousness.' To this eloquent summary given by Rev. Charles H. Kelly<sup>1</sup> I need not add a word.

On the other hand, the utmost freedom of thought is granted to us on subjects which, however important, do not essentially touch these vital doctrines. To quote a witty American Bishop, we do not believe that no one can enter the kingdom of God except through the mouth of Jonah's whale ; nor do we hold that the fact that our fathers looked at things with their own eyes binds

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<sup>1</sup> *Wesley, the Man, his Teaching, and his Work*, p. 15.

us never to look at them with ours. I am bold to affirm that no Church combines so happily security as to the essential doctrines of salvation with liberty of thought as to all questions of speculative theology. 'In this age of intellectual daring,' to quote from Dr. Clifford's address at the Wesley Centenary celebrations, 'we must not alienate the young mind by mental cowardice.' We must on occasion be ready to give sympathy and guidance to our young people, who are disturbed and perplexed by the discussions which they find in every newspaper and magazine. But the main part of our ministry we shall be wise to devote to those great doctrines of sin and salvation by which men live. Let us never forget that we are set in the Church 'for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of ministering, for the building up of the body of Christ, till we all attain unto the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.'

# SERMONS

O N

Several Occasions:

I N

THREE VOLUMES.

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B Y

JOHN WESLEY, M. A.

Fellow of *Lincoln-College*, OXFORD.

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V O L. I.

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*The volume is dated 1746. It is 12mo, pp. xii, 250. It has no Table of Contents or Index, but has 12 Sermons (Nos. I-XII) and a list of 'Books published by Mr. John and Charles Wesley' which fills two pages and contains seventy items, the last of which is 'Sermons on Several Occasions,' vol. I, price 2s. 6d.*

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## PREFACE TO THE SERMONS

1. THE following Sermons contain the substance of what I have been preaching for between eight and nine years last past. During that time I have frequently spoken in public, on every subject in the ensuing collection, and I am not conscious that there is any one point of doctrine, on which I am accustomed to speak in public, which is not here, incidentally, if not professedly, laid before every Christian reader. Every serious man who peruses these will therefore see, in the clearest manner, what these doctrines are which I embrace and teach as the essentials of true religion.

2. But I am thoroughly sensible, these are not proposed in such a manner as some may expect. Nothing here appears in an elaborate, elegant, or oratorical dress. If it had been

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Par. 1. This preface appears in the 1746 volume of the Sermons; the 'eight or nine years last past' cover the period since Wesley's conversion in 1738. It is to be noticed that these sermons were written in order to be preached; not in the first instance with a view to publication. A study of the texts recorded in the *Journal*, and of the Sermon List appended to the Standard Edition of the *Journal* by Mr. Curnock, shows that the majority of them were actually preached, some of them many times. Methodism is the only branch of the Christian Church which bases its theology on preached sermons; hence the emphasis which it lays upon the practical doctrines of religion, and the comparatively small importance which it attaches to the

more speculative and theoretical aspects of divine truth.

2. Compare the following paragraph in *The Connoisseur*, August 1, 1754, which almost suggests that the authors, Colman and Thornton, had seen this preface. It is not unlikely that they may have done so, for they were both Christ Church men, and could not fail to know something of the Wesleys. 'This affectation' (i.e. the use of long words and technical terms) 'is never more offensive than when it gets into the pulpit. The greater part of almost every audience that sits under our preachers are ignorant and illiterate, and should therefore have everything delivered to them in as plain, simple, and intelligible a manner as possible. Hard words, if they have

my desire or design to write thus, my leisure would not permit. But, in truth, I, at present, designed nothing less ; for I now write, as I generally speak, *ad populum*—to the bulk of mankind, to those who neither relish nor understand the art of speaking , but who, notwithstanding, are competent judges of those truths which are necessary to present and future happiness. I mention this, that curious readers may spare themselves the labour of seeking for what they will not find.

3. I design plain truth for plain people : therefore, of set purpose, I abstain from all nice and philosophical speculations ; from all perplexed and intricate reasonings , and, as far as possible, from even the show of learning, unless in sometimes citing the original Scripture. I labour to avoid all words which are not easy to be understood, all which are not used in common life ; and, in particular, those kinds of technical terms that so frequently occur in Bodies of Divinity , those modes of speaking which men of reading are intimately acquainted with, but which to common people are an unknown tongue. Yet, I am not assured, that I do not sometimes slide into them unawares , it is so extremely natural to imagine that a word which is familiar to ourselves is so to all the world.

4. Nay, my design is, in some sense, to forget all that ever I have read in my life. I mean to speak, in the general, as if

any meaning, can only serve to make them stare ; and they can never be edified by what they do not understand. Young clergymen, just come from the University, are proud of showing the world that they have been reading the Fathers, and are fond of entering on the most abstruse points of divinity. But they would employ their time more to their own credit, as well as the improvement of their hearers, if they would rather endeavour to explain and enforce the precepts of the Apostles and Evangelists, than retail the confused hypotheses of crabbed metaphysicians.'

3. 'The original Scripture,' i.e. the scripture in the original Greek.

Wesley sometimes does this, but it is usually to justify some rendering or interpretation which differs from that of the Authorized Version.

4. The qualifying phrases 'in some sense,' 'in general,' must be allowed their full weight. Wesley was an omnivorous reader. In the very paragraph in the letter quoted by him in the *Journal*, May 14, 1765, in which he says, 'In 1730 I began to be *homo unius libri*, to study (comparatively) no book but the Bible,' he mentions his indebtedness to Taylor's *Holy Living* and Law's *Christian Perfection* and *Serious Call*. In the so-called *Large Minutes*, published 1770, Question 32, he says to his preachers : '1. Read the most

I had never read one author, ancient or modern (always excepting the inspired). I am persuaded, that, on the one hand, this may be a means of enabling me more clearly to express the sentiments of my heart, while I simply follow the chain of my own thoughts, without entangling myself with those of other men, and that, on the other, I shall come with fewer weights upon my mind, with less of prejudice and prepossession, either to search for myself, or to deliver to others, the naked truths of the gospel.

5. To candid, reasonable men, I am not afraid to lay open what have been the inmost thoughts of my heart. I have thought, I am a creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit come from God, and returning to God: just hovering over the great gulf, till, a few moments hence, I am no more seen, I drop into an unchangeable eternity! I want to know one thing—the way to heaven, how to land safe on that happy shore. God Himself has condescended to teach the way, for this very end He came

useful books, and that regularly and constantly. “But I read only the Bible.” Then you ought to teach others to read only the Bible, and by parity of reason, to hear only the Bible: but if so, you need preach no more. Just so said George Bell. And what is the fruit? Why, now he neither reads the Bible nor anything else. This is rank enthusiasm. If you need no book but the Bible, you are got above St. Paul. He wanted others too. “Bring the books,” says he, “*but especially the parchments*,” those wrote on parchment. “But I have no *taste* for reading.” Contract a taste for it by use, or return to your trade.’

5. The concluding sentences explain the meaning of the previous paragraph. Wesley’s method was, first, to study the Bible with prayer and meditation; then to consult the experience of others; and finally, to examine what had been written

on the subject. This is expressed also in the general Preface to the *Works* (1771), par. 4: ‘In this edition I present to serious and candid men my last and maturest thoughts: agreeable, I hope, to Scripture, reason, and Christian antiquity.’ He recognizes the value of Christian experience, which is the living voice of the Holy Spirit, and of the tradition of the Church; but in complete accordance with the Protestant view, he puts the Bible first; *primus inter pares*, we might now be disposed to say; but still *primus*.

Many have called attention to the splendour of this whole paragraph. It recalls irresistibly the speech of Edwin’s chief, as given by Bede (*Eccles. Hist.* ii. 13): ‘The present life of man, O King, seems to me, in comparison of that Time which is unknown to us, like to a sparrow swiftly flying through the room, well warmed with the fire made in the

from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book ! At any price, give me the book of God ! I have it here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius libri*. Here then I am, far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone : only God is here. In His presence I open, I read His book , for this end, to find the way to heaven. Is there a doubt concerning the meaning of what I read ? Does anything appear dark or intricate ? I lift up my heart to the Father of Lights : ' Lord, is it not Thy word, " If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God " ? Thou " givest liberally, and upbraidest not." Thou hast said, " If any be willing to do Thy will, he shall know." I am willing to do, let me know, Thy will.' I then search after and consider parallel passages of Scripture, ' comparing spiritual things with spiritual.' I meditate thereon with all the attention and earnestness of which my mind is capable. If any doubt still remains, I consult those who are experienced in the things of God ; and then the writings whereby, being dead, they yet speak. And what I thus learn, that I teach.

6. I have accordingly set down in the following sermons what I find in the Bible concerning the way to heaven , with a view to distinguish this way of God from all those which are the inventions of men. I have endeavoured to describe the true, the scriptural, experimental religion, so as to omit nothing which is a real part thereof, and to add nothing thereto which is not. And herein it is more especially my desire, first, to guard those who are just setting their faces toward heaven (and who, having little acquaintance with the things of God, are the

midst of it, while the storms of rain and snow prevail abroad ; the sparrow, I say, flying in at one door and immediately out at another, vanishes out of your sight, returning from one winter to another.'

' I want to know one thing—the way to heaven.' This view of religion, as being mainly concerned with the securing of heaven, affects to some extent the perspective of Wesley's teaching about salvation,

as we shall see hereafter ; but it never interfered with his earnest desire to make life better for men here—mentally and physically, as well as spiritually.

*Homo unius libri*—' a man of one book.' The phrase goes back to the saying of St. Thomas Aquinas, ' *Cavete hominem unius libri* ' ; which is quoted by Jeremy Taylor, where Wesley probably found it.

more liable to be turned out of the way), from formality, from mere outside religion, which has almost driven heart-religion out of the world, and, secondly, to warn those who know the religion of the heart, the faith which worketh by love, lest at any time they make void the law through faith, and so fall back into the snare of the devil.

7. By the advice and at the request of some of my friends, I have prefixed to the other sermons contained in this volume, three sermons of my own, and one of my brother's, preached before the University of Oxford. My design required some discourses on those heads; and I preferred these before any others, as being a stronger answer than any which can be drawn up now, to those who have frequently asserted that we have changed our doctrine of late, and do not preach now what we did some years ago. Any man of understanding may now judge for himself, when he has compared the latter with the former sermons.

8. But some may say, I have mistaken the way myself, although I take upon me to teach it to others. It is probable many will think this, and it is very possible that I have. But I trust, whereinsoever I have mistaken, my mind is open to conviction. I sincerely desire to be better informed. I say to God and man, 'What I know not, teach thou me!'

9. Are you persuaded you see more clearly than me? It is not unlikely that you may. Then treat me as you would desire to be treated yourself upon a change of circumstances. Point me out a better way than I have yet known. Show me it is so, by plain proof of Scripture. And if I linger in the path I have been accustomed to tread, and am therefore unwilling to leave it, labour with me a little, take me by the hand, and lead me as I am able to bear. But be not displeased if I entreat you not to beat me down in order to quicken my pace: I can go but feebly and slowly at best; then, I should not be able to

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8 and 9. The modesty of par. 8 sufficiently vindicates Wesley from any intention of setting up his conclusions as the final word in theology. The playful irony of par. 9 illustrates

his gift of humour, of which perhaps the best example is to be found in the preface to his *Complete English Dictionary*. See Green's *Bibliography*, No. 162.

go at all. May I not request of you, further, not to give me hard names, in order to bring me into the right way? Suppose I were ever so much in the wrong, I doubt this would not set me right. Rather, it would make me run so much the farther from you, and so get more and more out of the way.

10. Nay, perhaps, if you are angry, so shall I be too; and then there will be small hopes of finding the truth. If once anger arise, *ἡὕτε καπνός* (as Homer somewhere expresses it), this smoke will so dim the eyes of my soul, that I shall be able to see nothing clearly. For God's sake, if it be possible to avoid it, let us not provoke one another to wrath. Let us not kindle in each other this fire of hell, much less blow it up into a flame. If we could discern truth by that dreadful light, would it not be loss, rather than gain? For, how far is love, even with many wrong opinions, to be preferred before truth itself without love! We may die without the knowledge of many truths, and yet be carried into Abraham's bosom. But, if we die without love, what will knowledge avail? Just as much as it avails the devil and his angels.

The God of love forbid we should ever make the trial! May He prepare us for the knowledge of all truth, by filling our hearts with all His love, and with all joy and peace in believing!

10. Wesley had a great admiration for Homer. In *Journal*, August 12, 1748, he says: 'What an amazing genius had this man, to write with such strength of thought and beauty of expression, when he had none to go before him! And what a vein of piety runs through his whole work!' He read the

*Odyssey* in September 1769, and thought it far better than the *Iliad*, 'on all occasions recommending the fear of God, with justice, mercy, and truth.' This reference is to *Iliad* xviii. 110, where Achilles says that *χόλος* (wrath) *ἀνδρῶν ἐν στήθεσιν ἀέξεται, ἡὕτε καπνός*, 'rises high in the breast of men, like smoke.'

## SERMON I

### SALVATION BY FAITH

PREACHED AT ST. MARY'S, OXFORD, BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY,  
ON JUNE 11, 1738

FIVE of the Standard Sermons were preached in St. Mary's before the University of Oxford; viz. Nos. I, II, IV, and XIII by John, and III by Charles Wesley. The preachers were appointed from the various colleges in turn by the Vice-Chancellor, and all Masters of Arts of two or more years' standing, who were presbyters or deacons of the Church of England, were liable to be called upon to officiate. Wesley tells us (*Journal*, July 25, 1741) that his turn came about once in three years. The sermons were preached at two in the afternoon on all Sundays and at 10 a.m. on saints' days, except in the Long Vacation, and had to be delivered in English, except on certain special occasions, on which Latin was to be used. Notice of at least two months had to be given to the preacher, and he received a fee of three guineas. If any statement was made in the sermon contrary to the doctrine or discipline of the Church of England, the Vice-Chancellor had authority to demand a copy of the sermon, which was submitted to the Professors of Theology; and they had power to suspend the preacher from preaching again within the precincts of the University unless he recanted his statements. This power was exercised in the case of Wesley's Sermon IV, on Scriptural Christianity (q.v.). All Doctors, Masters, graduates, and scholars were required diligently to attend these services, unless they could find some reasonable excuse for their absence. See *Statuta Universitatis Oxoniensis Titulus XII, De Concionibus*.

This sermon was preached on June 11, 1738 (not June 18, as stated in the note to the sermon in *Works*, 1771). The *Journal* only says, under date June 8, 'On Saturday came to Stanton Harcourt' (a village in Oxfordshire, about six miles due west of Oxford, with a population of about 500 souls). 'Having preached faith in Christ there on Sunday the 11th, I went on to Oxford; and thence on Monday to London.' Apparently he tried over his discourse at Stanton Harcourt in the morning, and then went on to Oxford, and preached it there in the



afternoon. The meeting in Aldersgate Street where Paul, Luther, and Wesley appear in such a significant conjunction, and where Wesley felt 'my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death,' took place on May 24. His new experience was thus only eighteen days old when he uttered this great manifesto before the University. The Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the High Street of Oxford has reverberated to many epoch-making utterances. Here Cranmer witnessed a good confession, before he went out to seal his faith with his blood at the stake near Balliol, where Latimer and Ridley had already suffered; here Newman and Pusey preached those sermons which led to the Catholic revival in the Church of England in the nineteenth century; but never have its ancient walls re-echoed words of more far-reaching importance in the history of religion than when on this day John Wesley blew the first trumpet-call of the Evangelical Revival.

This was not a new sermon composed for the occasion; Wesley had preached on May 14 at St. Ann's, Aldersgate, and at the Savoy Chapel, on 'free salvation by faith in the blood of Christ'—doubtless this sermon. Indeed, it was probably written in America. Note the denial of the possibility of good works before justification, the lack of personal passion in the definition of faith, the uncompromising statement in ii. 6 of the complete absence of sin in the believer, and the confusion of justification with regeneration—all marks of Wesley's earlier period. Still, it was a favourite discourse of his; and there are several records of his having preached it in the *Journal*, and in the sermon list up to the end of 1760: notably on his father's tombstone at Epworth on June 7, 1742. He re-wrote it entirely in 1765 and published it under the title of 'The Scripture Way of Salvation,' and placed it as No. XLIII in the 1771 edition.<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to compare the two sermons. The divisions are the same; but in the second salvation is taken to include prevenient grace, justification, and sanctification, which is spoken of as identical with regeneration in its beginning but as going on gradually to entire sanctification. It is allowed that good works may be done before conversion, and are indeed remotely necessary to it, though not properly a condition of salvation. The doctrine that there is no sin in a believer is declared to be extremely mischievous, as blocking the way to the seeking of entire sanctification, with which the rest of the sermon is concerned.

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<sup>1</sup> No. L in the present ed. See vol. ii, p. 442.

*By grace are ye saved through faith.*—EPH. ii. 8.

1. ALL the blessings which God hath bestowed upon man are of His mere grace, bounty, or favour ; His free, undeserved favour ; favour altogether undeserved ; man having no claim to the least of His mercies. It was free grace that ‘ formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into him a living soul,’ and stamped on that soul the image of God, and ‘ put all things under his feet.’ The same free grace continues to us, at this day, life, and breath, and all things. For there is nothing we are, or have, or do, which can deserve the least thing at God’s hand. ‘ All our works, Thou, O God, hast wrought in us.’ These, therefore, are so many more instances of free mercy : and whatever righteousness may be found in man, this is also the gift of God.

2. Wherewithal then shall a sinful man atone for any the least of his sins ? With his own works ? No. Were they ever so many or holy, they are not his own, but God’s. But indeed they are all unholy and sinful themselves, so that every

Par. 1. The conception of God as an absolute Sovereign, which underlies this paragraph, fails to recognize the true relationship between God and man which our Lord reveals to us, when He teaches us to call God ‘ Our Father.’ Even creation implies a certain claim by the creature on the Creator ; still more does Fatherhood involve a claim on the part of the children. Having brought us into being under conditions for which we were not ‘ responsible, God (we say reverently) is bound as our Father to provide for those needs which are thereby occasioned ; and above all, for our salvation from sin.

2. Wesley changed his opinion as to the nature of good works done before conversion. In *Minutes*, 1745 (Friday, August 2), we find : ‘ Q. 7. Have we duly considered the case of Cornelius ? Was he not in the favour of God, when his “ prayers and alms came up for a memorial

before God ” ? i.e. before he believed in Christ ? A. It does seem that he was, in some degree. But we speak not of those who have not heard the gospel. Q. 8. But were those works of his splendid sins ? A. No ; nor were they done without the grace of Christ. Q. 9. How, then, can we maintain that all works done before we have a sense of the pardoning love of God are sin ? And, as such, an abomination to Him ? A. The works of him who has heard the gospel and does not believe are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done. And yet we know not how to say that they are an abomination to the Lord in him who feareth God, and from that principle does the best he can.’ Similarly in the note on Acts x. 4 (1755) he says : ‘ Dare any man say, These were only splendid sins ? Or that they were an abomination before God ? And yet

one of them needs a fresh atonement. Only corrupt fruit grows on a corrupt tree. And his heart is altogether corrupt and abominable, being 'come short of the glory of God,' the glorious righteousness at first impressed on his soul, after the image of his great Creator. Therefore, having nothing, neither righteousness nor works, to plead, his mouth is utterly stopped before God.

3. If then sinful men find favour with God, it is 'grace upon grace!' If God vouchsafe still to pour fresh blessings upon us, yea, the greatest of all blessings, salvation; what can we say to these things, but, 'Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!' And thus it is. Herein 'God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died' to save us. 'By grace' then 'are ye saved through faith.' Grace is the source, faith the condition, of salvation.

Now, that we fall not short of the grace of God, it concerns us carefully to inquire—

- I. WHAT FAITH IT IS THROUGH WHICH WE ARE SAVED.
- II. WHAT IS THE SALVATION WHICH IS THROUGH FAITH.
- III. HOW WE MAY ANSWER SOME OBJECTIONS.

I. What faith it is through which we are saved.

i. And, first, it is not barely the faith of a Heathen.

Now, God requireth of a Heathen to believe, 'that God is, that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him'; and that He is to be sought by glorifying Him as God, by giving Him thanks for all things, and by a careful practice of moral virtue, of justice, mercy, and truth, toward their fellow creatures. A Greek or Roman, therefore, yea, a Scythian or

it is certain, in the Christian sense, Cornelius was then an unbeliever.' But this modification of the unpromising statement that such works 'are all unholy and sinful' does not affect the argument; however good they may be, they cannot atone for past sins; at best we have but done that it was our duty to do, and have not acquired any merit.

3. The first quotation hardly bears the sense here given to it. St. John (i. 16) says, 'We have received *χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος*, grace instead of grace; for the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.' The law was itself a gift of grace, but we have received, instead of it, the greater grace and the profounder truth of the gospel.

Indian, was without excuse if he did not believe thus much : the being and attributes of God, a future state of reward and punishment, and the obligatory nature of moral virtue. For this is barely the faith of a Heathen.

2. Nor, secondly, is it the faith of a devil, though this goes much farther than that of a Heathen. For the devil believes, not only that there is a wise and powerful God, gracious to reward, and just to punish, but also, that Jesus is the Son of God, the Christ, the Saviour of the world. So we find him declaring, in express terms, ' I know Thee who Thou art ; the Holy One of God ' (Luke iv. 34). Nor can we doubt but that unhappy spirit believes all those words which came out of the mouth of the Holy One, yea, and whatsoever else was written by those holy men of old, of two of whom he was compelled to give that glorious testimony, ' These men are the servants of the most high God, who show unto you the way of salvation.' Thus much, then, the great enemy of God and man believes, and trembles in believing,—that God was made manifest in the flesh, that He will ' tread all enemies under His feet ', and that ' all Scripture was given by inspiration of God.' Thus far goeth the faith of a devil.

3. Thirdly. The faith through which we are saved, in that sense of the word which will hereafter be explained, is not barely that which the Apostles themselves had while Christ was yet upon earth ; though they so believed on Him as to ' leave all and follow Him ', although they had then power to work miracles, to ' heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease ' ; yea, they had then ' power and authority over all devils ' ; and, which is beyond all this, were sent by their Master to ' preach the kingdom of God.'

4. What faith is it then through which we are saved ? It may be answered, first, in general, it is a faith in Christ : Christ, and God through Christ, are the proper objects of it.

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I. 3. In *Minutes*, June 16, 1747.  
Q. 4. Wesley says: ' The apostles themselves had not the proper Christian faith till after the Day of Pentecost.'

4. The view that faith is rather emotional than intellectual is entirely in accord with the conclusions of the most recent psychologists. In fact, it is an act of the whole man,

Herein, therefore, it is sufficiently, absolutely distinguished from the faith either of ancient or modern Heathens. And from the faith of a devil it is fully distinguished by this : it is not barely a speculative, rational thing, a cold, lifeless assent, a train of ideas in the head ; but also a disposition of the heart. For thus saith the Scripture, ' With the heart man believeth unto righteousness ', and, ' If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe with thy heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.'

5. And herein does it differ from that faith which the Apostles themselves had while our Lord was on earth, that it acknowledges the necessity and merit of His death, and the power of His resurrection. It acknowledges His death as the only sufficient means of redeeming man from death eternal, and His resurrection as the restoration of us all to life and immortality ; inasmuch as He ' was delivered for our sins, and rose again for our justification.' Christian faith is, then, not only an assent to the whole gospel of Christ, but also a full reliance on the blood of Christ ; a trust in the merits of His life, death, and resurrection , a recumbency upon Him as our

not of any one faculty. It must have some *intellectual* basis—though this may be very slight, as we may judge from the conversions of men who have no knowledge at all of theology ; it is prompted by *emotion* ; but its essence is an act of the will, what Methodists often speak of as a venturing upon Christ ; and it always results in an active effort to realize the new ideal. In the passage quoted by Wesley, the word *καρδία* (heart) means the whole personality of man ; not, like our 'heart,' exclusively the emotions. Both the Hebrews and the Greeks used the word 'bowels' to indicate the emotions ; and they never distinguished, as we do, between the heart and the brain as the seats of emotion and intellect respectively. The contrast in the text is not between heart and

brain, but between heart and mouth ; the inward experience and the outward confession. It thus proves what Wesley intended, but it goes farther than he saw ; faith is an act of the whole inward man.

5. Nothing could be better than this definition of faith ; and it lays the right emphasis on the act of the will, expressed by reliance, trust, recumbency, closing with Him, cleaving to Him. The only possible emendation that can be suggested is that the words 'as far as it is known' should be added to 'the whole gospel of Christ.' Assent to the whole gospel is certainly not essential to salvation.

This view of the nature of faith is now so generally accepted that it seems at first sight surprising that it should have met with so much

atonement and our life, *as given for us*, and *living in us*. [It is a sure confidence which a man hath in God, that through the merits of Christ, *his* sins are forgiven, and *he* reconciled to the favour of God ;] and, in consequence hereof, a closing with Him, and cleaving to Him, as our 'wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption,' or, in one word, our salvation.

II. What salvation it is, which is through this faith, is the second thing to be considered.

1. And, first, whatsoever else it imply, it is a present salvation. It is something attainable, yea, actually attained, on earth, by those who are partakers of this faith. For thus saith the Apostle to the believers at Ephesus, and in them to the believers of all ages, not, *Ye shall be* (though that also is true), but, '*Ye are saved through faith.*'

2. *Ye are saved* (to comprise all in one word) from sin. This is the salvation which is through faith. This is that great salvation foretold by the angel, before God brought His First-begotten into the world: 'Thou shalt call His name JESUS; for He shall save His people from their sins.' And neither here, nor in other parts of holy writ, is there any limitation or restriction. All His people, or, as it is elsewhere

opposition when it was preached by Wesley. But it must be remembered that in the current theological literature of the time faith was almost always used in the sense of assent to some proposition on evidence adduced; and, in particular, assent to the creed of the Church and to the truth of the Bible. Feeling was not to be allowed to interfere with the cool conclusions of dispassionate reason; and the worst sin was 'enthusiasm,' which was regarded as bad form—an unpardonable fault in that age of chilly correctness. The admirable Essays on Morality which are found in the periodical literature of the early eighteenth century invariably emphasize the supreme importance of conduct, as contrasted with feeling. Thus in the *Spectator*,

No. 459 (August 16, 1712), Addison, comparing morality with faith, says that morality has the pre-eminence in several respects, one of which is 'Because the rule of morality is much more certain than that of faith, all the civilized nations of the world agreeing in the great points of morality, as much as they differ in those of faith'; and later he says that the 'excellency of faith' is identical with 'the belief of revealed religion.' It is assumed throughout that a man can live a moral life if he likes; and the best that can be said of faith is that it 'strengthens and supports morality.'

II. 1. It is noticeable that not one word is said in this sermon about salvation from hell.

expressed, 'all that believe in Him,' He will save from all their sins, from original and actual, past and present sin, 'of the flesh and of the spirit.' Through faith that is in Him, they are saved both from the guilt and from the power of it.

3. First, from the guilt of all past sin: for, whereas all the world is guilty before God, insomuch that should He 'be extreme to mark what is done amiss, there is none that could abide it' and whereas, 'by the law is' only 'the knowledge of sin,' but no deliverance from it, so that, 'by' fulfilling 'the deeds of the law, no flesh can be justified in His sight' now, 'the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, is manifested unto all that believe.' Now, 'they are justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.' 'Him God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for (or by) the remission of the sins that are past.' Now hath Christ taken away 'the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.' He hath 'blotted out the handwriting that was against us, taking it out of the way, nailing it to His cross.' 'There is therefore no condemnation now to them which' believe 'in Christ Jesus.'

4. And being saved from guilt, they are saved from fear. Not indeed from a filial fear of offending; but from all servile

3. The interpretation of Rom. iii. 25 cannot be sustained. Neither 'for' nor 'by' gives the correct meaning of *διὰ*, which is 'on account of.' The death of Christ manifests the righteousness of God (1) in the passing over of sins committed before the coming of Christ, and (2) in the present justification of the believer. For example, David was forgiven before the Atonement had been effected; but God is justified in forgiving him because of the Atonement which was to be effected for the sins of the whole world, including those of former times.

4. The question of final perseverance was one of those which divided Wesley from Whitefield. In 1743

Wesley tried to bring about an agreement with him, and set out the concessions which he was prepared to make. The document is given in the *Journal*, August 24, 1743. In it he says: 'I incline to believe that there is a state attainable in this life from which a man cannot finally fall; and that he has attained this who can say, "Old things are passed away; all things" in me "are become new."' But Whitefield refused the eirenicon; and Wesley quite retracted from the position which for the sake of peace he had adopted in this document. The concluding paragraph of *Serious Thoughts upon the Perseverance of the Saints* (1751) says: 'If the Scriptures are

fear ; from that fear which hath torment , from fear of punishment ; from fear of the wrath of God, whom they now no longer regard as a severe Master, but as an indulgent Father. ' They have not received again the spirit of bondage, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father the Spirit itself also bearing witness with their spirits, that they are the children of God.' They are also saved from the fear, though not from the possibility, of falling away from the grace of God, and coming short of the great and precious promises. [They are sealed with the Holy Spirit of Promise, which is the earnest of their inheritance (Eph. i. 13).] Thus have they ' peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. They rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts, through the Holy Ghost, which is given unto them.' And hereby they are persuaded (though perhaps not at all times,

true, those who are sanctified by the blood of the covenant may nevertheless so fall from God as to perish everlastingly.' In a letter dated August 3, 1789 (*Works*, xiii. 116), he says that the doctrine of unconditional perseverance ' leads the way by easy steps first to presumption, and then to black despair. What a blessing it is that you have been saved from this poisonous doctrine ! '

' Perhaps not at all times,' &c. Wesley is speaking from his own experience. The night after his conversion he ' was much buffeted with temptations ' ; the next day he was tempted to think that his faith was not real ; on May 31 he ' grieved the Spirit of God and was troubled and in heaviness.' Even on October 14 he writes in his *Journal*: ' I have not that joy in the Holy Ghost ; no settled, lasting joy. Nor have I such a peace as excludes the possibility either of fear or doubt.' On January 4, 1739, he speaks more strongly still: ' I affirm I am not a Christian now. I do not love

either the Father or the Son. Joy in the Holy Ghost I have not. Yet again, I have not the peace of God.' In all this we have, what we so often find in him, the conclusions of his severe logic conflicting with experience. He did not at first realize that the ideal of the Christian life, as described in Scripture, is by its nature attainable only by long effort ; that it is something to be aimed at, not immediately reached.

Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,  
Or what's a heaven for ?

In one of Lewis Carroll's parodies of the Mathematical Tripos papers he has a question in which an elephant walking up a plank is a factor ; and Carroll humorously adds in brackets, ' The weight of the elephant may be regarded as negligible ! ' When Wesley was formulating his theological theories about sin, and Christian perfection, and other matters, he too often began by disregarding the weight of the elephant ; but his strong common sense invariably came to the rescue in the long run.



nor with the same fullness of persuasion), that 'neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

5. Again: through this faith they are saved from the power of sin, as well as from the guilt of it. So the Apostle declares, 'Ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not' (1 John iii. 5, &c.). Again: 'Little children, let no man deceive you. He that committeth sin is of the devil. Whosoever believeth is born of God. And whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.' Once more 'We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not' (1 John v. 18).

6. He that is, by faith, born of God sinneth not (1) by any habitual sin, for all habitual sin is sin reigning: but sin cannot reign in any that believeth. Nor (2) by any wilful sin; for his will, while he abideth in the faith, is utterly set against all sin, and abhorreth it as deadly poison. Nor (3) by any sinful desire; for he continually desireth the holy and perfect will of God; and any tendency to an unholy desire, he

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6. Wesley soon found reason to modify these strong statements. As to habitual sin, there can be no question. As to wilful sin, it may be theoretically said that a believer, as long as he believes, cannot wilfully sin; and in the *Minutes*, 1744, Q. 9, Wesley affirms: 'If a believer wilfully sins, he casts away his faith; neither is it possible he should have justifying faith again, without previously repenting.' That he cannot be forgiven without repentance may be admitted; but it is surely a misuse of language to say that he must, so to speak, go back to the beginning, and be born again. As our Lord suggests (John xiii. 10), a man

does not need to take a bath every time he soils his feet. Sin is a sickness, but it need not be unto death. The life imparted when a man is born again is not destroyed, though it is enfeebled, by a single lapse of the will into sin. Practically this is admitted in *Minutes*, 1745, when it is stated that from the moment of justification 'the believer gradually dies to sin, and grows in grace. Yet sin remains in him; yea, the seed of all sin, till he is sanctified throughout in spirit, soul, and body.' As to sinful desires, the possibility of the rising of unholy desires in the believer is here admitted; and is expressly affirmed in the sermon on

by the grace of God, stifleth in the birth. Nor (4) doth he sin by infirmities, whether in act, word, or thought; for his infirmities have no concurrence of his will, and without this they are not properly sins. Thus, 'he that is born of God doth not commit sin': and though he cannot say he hath not sinned, yet now 'he sinneth not.'

7. This then is the salvation which is through faith, even in the present world: a salvation from sin, and the consequences of sin, both often expressed in the word *justification*; which, taken in the largest sense, implies a deliverance from guilt and punishment, by the atonement of Christ actually applied to the soul of the sinner now believing on Him, and a deliverance from the [whole body] of sin, through Christ *formed in his heart*. So that he who is thus justified, or saved by faith, is indeed *born again*. He is born again of the Spirit unto a new life, which 'is hid with Christ in God.' [He is a new creature: old things are passed away: all things in him are become new.] And as a new-born babe he gladly receives the *ἄδολον*, 'sincere milk of the word, and grows thereby'; going on in the might of the Lord his God, from faith to faith, from grace to grace, until at length, he comes unto 'a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.'

Sin in Believers, v. 2: 'Although we are renewed, purified, sanctified, the moment we truly believe in Christ, yet we are not then renewed, cleansed, purified altogether; but the flesh, the evil nature, still remains (though subdued) and wars against the Spirit.' But Sermons XLVI and XLVII should be read and compared with this paragraph. As to infirmities, in which there is no concurrence of the will, there is no question of sin at all. See also Sermons VIII and XXXIX.

7. Justification is here used generically to include pardon and regeneration. In Sermon XLVI, ii. 1, Wesley distinguishes regeneration as 'implying an inward, actual change' from justification, which implies 'a

relative one'; and goes on: 'Yet they come to one and the same thing; as every one that believes is both justified and born of God.' This is true in point of time; but the distinction in thought is real, and it is better to maintain it. In Sermon XV, pars. 1-3, the distinction is very clearly stated and its importance maintained.

The original Greek word, translated 'sincere' (*ἄδολον*), is omitted in the 1771 edition. It was quoted in the first edition, and doubtless in the delivery of the sermon before the University, because the English rendering is inadequate. The word is shown by many examples in the Papyri to mean 'pure, unadulterated.'

III. The first usual objection to this is,

1. That to preach salvation, or justification, by faith only, is to preach against holiness and good works. To which a short answer might be given: 'It would be so, if we spake, as some do, of a faith which was separate from these; but we speak of a faith which is not so, but [necessarily] productive of all good works, and all holiness.'

2. But it may be of use to consider it more at large; especially since it is no new objection, but as old as St. Paul's time: for even then it was asked, 'Do we not make void the law through faith?' We answer, first, all who preach not faith do manifestly make void the law; either directly and grossly, by limitations and comments that eat out all the spirit of the text, or indirectly, by not pointing out the only means whereby it is possible to perform it. Whereas, secondly, 'we establish the law,' both by showing its full extent and spiritual meaning, and by calling all to that living way, whereby 'the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in them.' These, while they trust in the blood of Christ alone, use all the ordinances which He hath appointed, do all the 'good works which He had before prepared that they should walk therein,' and enjoy and manifest all holy and heavenly tempers, even the same mind that was in Christ Jesus.

3. But does not preaching this faith lead men into pride? We answer, Accidentally it may therefore ought every

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III. 1. Wesley never varied in his teaching as to the relation between faith and works. In *Minutes*, 1745, Q. 25, we find: 'Does faith supersede (set aside the necessity of) holiness or good works? A. In no wise. So far from it, that it implies both, as a cause doth its effects.' He admits, however, under an earlier question (No. 2) that 'fruits or works meet for repentance go before faith, supposing there be opportunity for them,' and that in this sense they may be regarded as 'conditions of justification'; he thinks that the word 'condition' has been 'griev-

ously abused'; but he regards the dispute as to the term 'a mere strife of words,' and declines to continue it. Still, his own preference is to affirm that 'faith in Christ is the sole condition of justification.' See note on Sermon XXII, 2.

3. 'Of yourselves cometh neither your faith nor your salvation.' If this be so, where does human responsibility come in? The passage quoted (Eph. ii. 8) will not bear the weight of this statement; it does not say that faith is the gift of God; but that salvation (τοῦτο, this whole thing) is the gift of God. The *power*

believer to be earnestly cautioned, in the words of the great Apostle, 'Because of unbelief,' the first branches 'were broken off; and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear. If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God! On them which fell, severity, but towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness, otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.' And while he continues therein, he will remember those words of St. Paul, foreseeing and answering this very objection (Rom. iii. 27), 'Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay but by the law of faith.' If a man were justified by his works, he would have whereof to glory. But there is no glorying for him 'that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly' (Rom. iv. 5). To the same effect are the words both preceding and following the text (Eph. ii. 4, &c.): 'God, who is rich in mercy, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), that He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves.' Of yourselves cometh neither your faith nor your salvation: 'it is the gift of God', the free, undeserved gift, the faith through which ye are saved, as well as the salvation which He of His own good pleasure, His mere favour, annexes thereto.

to believe, like every other power both of mind and body, is the gift of God, bestowed, like the power to breathe, on every man; the *disposition* to believe is wrought in man by the Spirit of God, and without it faith is impossible; and this gift of God 'cometh upon *all* men unto justification of life.' Nevertheless, it is left to our own choice (and this also is a gift of God) to decide whether we will use the power and yield to the disposition, so as actually to exercise the faith which bringeth salvation. In *Predestination Calmly Considered*, pars. 45-7, Wesley says:

'Natural free-will, in the present state of mankind, I do not understand; I only assert that there is a measure of free-will supernaturally restored to every man, together with that supernatural light which "enlightens every man that cometh into the world." And again: 'We cannot allow that man can only resist, and not in any wise "work together with God"; or that God is so the whole worker of our salvation, as to exclude man's working at all. This I dare not say.' But this does not make faith a *meritorious* cause of our salvation; the price has been

That ye believe, is one instance of His grace, that believing ye are saved, another. 'Not of works, lest any man should boast.' For all our works, all our righteousness, which were before our believing, merited nothing of God but condemnation; so far were they from deserving faith, which therefore, whenever given, is not of works. Neither is salvation of the works we do when we believe; for it is then God that worketh in us: and, therefore, that He giveth us a reward for what He Himself worketh, only commendeth the riches of His mercy, but leaveth us nothing whereof to glory.

4. However, may not the speaking thus of the mercy of God, as saving or justifying freely by faith only, encourage men in sin? Indeed, it may and will: many will 'continue in sin that grace may abound', but their blood is upon their own head. The goodness of God ought to lead them to repentance; and so it will those who are sincere of heart. When they know there is yet forgiveness with Him, they will cry aloud that He would blot out their sins also, through faith which is in Jesus. And if they earnestly cry, and faint not; if they seek Him in all the means He hath appointed; if they refuse to be comforted till He come; 'He will come, and will not tarry.' And He can do much work in a short time. Many are the examples, in the Acts of the Apostles, of God's [shedding abroad] this faith in men's hearts, even like lightning falling from heaven. So in the same hour that Paul and Silas began to preach, the jailer repented, believed, and was baptized, as were three thousand, by St. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, who all repented and believed at his first preaching. And, blessed be God, there are now many living proofs that He is still 'mighty to save.'

5. Yet to the same truth, placed in another view, a quite contrary objection is made 'If a man cannot be saved by all

paid once for all by our Lord; that I stretch out my hand to receive what He has bought for me, is a condition of my possessing it, but is not any part of the price. But, indeed, the conception of salvation as something bought or merited, even

by the death of our Saviour, is only one aspect of the truth, and may easily be pressed too far.

'All our works merited nothing of God but condemnation.' See note on par. I. 1.

that he can do, this will drive men to despair.' True, to despair of being saved by their own works, their own merits or righteousness. And so it ought ; for none can trust in the merits of Christ, till he has utterly renounced his own. He that 'goeth about to establish his own righteousness' cannot receive the righteousness of God. The righteousness which is of faith cannot be given him while he trusteth in that which is of the law.

6. But this, it is said, is an uncomfortable doctrine. The devil spoke like himself, that is, without either truth or shame, when he dared to suggest to men that it is such. It is the only comfortable one, it is 'very full of comfort,' to all self-destroyed, self-condemned sinners. That 'whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed : that the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him' : here is comfort, high as heaven, stronger than death ! What ! Mercy for all ? For Zacchaeus, a public robber ? For Mary Magdalene, a common harlot ? Methinks I hear one say, 'Then I, even I, may hope for mercy !' And so thou mayest, thou afflicted one, whom none hath comforted ! God will not cast out thy prayer. Nay, perhaps He may say the next hour, 'Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee' ; so forgiven, that they shall reign over thee no more, yea, and that 'the Holy Spirit shall bear witness with thy spirit that thou art a child of God.' O glad tidings ! tidings of great joy, which are sent unto all people ! 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters : come ye, and buy, without money and without price.' Whatsoever your sins be, 'though red like crimson,' though more than the hairs of your head, 'return ye unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon you, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.'

7. When no more objections occur, then we are simply told that salvation by faith only ought not to be preached as the first doctrine, or, at least, not to be preached to all. But what saith the Holy Ghost ? 'Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ.' So then, that 'whosoever believeth on Him shall be saved,' is, and must be, the foundation of all our preaching ; that is, must be

preached first. 'Well, but not to all.' To whom then are we not to preach it? Whom shall we except? The poor? Nay; they have a peculiar right to have the gospel preached unto them. The unlearned? No. God hath revealed these things unto unlearned and ignorant men from the beginning. The young? By no means. 'Suffer these,' in any wise, to come unto Christ, 'and forbid them not.' The sinners? Least of all. 'He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' Why then, if any, we are to except the rich, the learned, the reputable, the moral men. And, it is true, they too often except themselves from hearing, yet we must speak the words of our Lord. For thus the tenor of our commission runs, 'Go and preach the gospel to every creature.' If any man wrest it, or any part of it, to his destruction, he must bear his own burden. But still, 'as the Lord liveth, whatsoever the Lord saith unto us, that we will speak.'

8. At this time, more especially, will we speak, that 'by grace are ye saved through faith': because, never was the maintaining this doctrine more seasonable than it is at this day. Nothing but this can effectually prevent the increase of the Romish delusion among us. It is endless to attack, one by one, all the errors of that Church. But salvation by faith strikes at the root, and all fall at once where this is established. It was this doctrine, which our Church justly *calls the strong rock and foundation of the Christian religion*, that first drove Popery out of these kingdoms, and it is this alone can keep it out. Nothing but this can give a check to that immorality which hath 'overspread the land as a flood.' Can you empty the great deep, drop by drop? Then you may reform us by dissuasives from particular vices. But let the

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8. 'The strong rock,' &c. Quoted from the second part of the homily 'Of Salvation.' A wise and weighty paragraph; good to be read and pondered over by many of our modern champions of Protestantism and of our social reformers. As Mr. Curnock says in his note (*Journal*, vol. i. p. 484), 'It was in St. Mary's,

Oxford, that John Henry Newman, a century later, preached the sermons that heralded the advent of Tractarianism. Remembering this, how significant the words of Wesley in this great sermon—the sermon that heralded the advent of the Methodist Revival!'

'righteousness which is of God by faith' be brought in, and so shall its proud waves be stayed. Nothing but this can stop the mouths of those who 'glory in their shame, and openly deny the Lord that bought them.' They can talk as sublimely of the law, as he that hath it written by God in his heart. To hear them speak on this head might incline one to think they were not far from the kingdom of God: but take them out of the law into the gospel, begin with the righteousness of faith; with Christ, 'the end of the law to every one that believeth'; and those who but now appeared almost, if not altogether, Christians, stand confessed the sons of perdition; as far from life and salvation (God be merciful unto them!) as the depth of hell from the height of heaven.

9. For this reason the adversary so rages whenever 'salvation by faith' is declared to the world for this reason did he stir up earth and hell, to destroy those who first preached it. And for the same reason, knowing that faith alone could overturn the foundations of his kingdom, did he call forth all his forces, and employ all his arts of lies and calumny, to affright [that champion of the Lord of hosts,] Martin Luther, from reviving it. Nor can we wonder thereat; for, as that man of God observes, 'How would it enrage a proud, strong man armed, to be stopped and set at nought by a little child coming against him with a reed in his hand!' especially when he knew that little child would surely overthrow him, and tread him under foot. Even so, Lord Jesus! Thus hath Thy strength been ever 'made perfect in weakness'! Go forth then, thou little child that believest in Him, and His 'right hand shall teach thee terrible things!' Though thou art helpless and weak as an infant of days, the strong man shall not be able to stand before thee. Thou shalt prevail over him, and subdue him, and overthrow him, and trample him

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9. The reference to Martin Luther becomes doubly significant when we remember that it was whilst listening to his introduction to his Commentary on Romans, that, eighteen days before, Wesley 'felt his heart

strangely warmed.' He later (1749) translated the Life of Luther. But in *Journal*, June 15, 1741, he criticizes Luther's Galatians most severely. I have not yet identified this quotation.



under thy feet. Thou shalt march on, under the great Captain of thy salvation, 'conquering and to conquer,' until all thine enemies are destroyed, and 'death is swallowed up in victory.'

Now, thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, for ever and ever. Amen.

## SERMON II

### THE ALMOST CHRISTIAN

PREACHED AT ST. MARY'S, OXFORD, BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY  
ON JULY 25, 1741

THIS sermon was preached on Sunday afternoon at two o'clock. Wesley says (*Journal* of this date): 'It being my turn (which comes about once in three years) I preached at St. Mary's before the University. So numerous a congregation (from whatever motives they came) I have seldom seen at Oxford. My text was the confession of poor Agrippa.' He had already preached the same sermon in Charles Square, London, in the open air on June 28. He had intended to preach before the University the sermon on Isaiah i. 21, 'How is the faithful city become a harlot!' which is published in the later editions of Wesley's *Works* as No. CXXXIV. It was found after his death in English, dated June 24, 1741; and also in Latin. Dr. Adam Clarke supplemented the imperfect English copy from the Latin for publication. Wesley read it on June 28 to Lady Huntingdon; but she dissuaded him from preaching it at St. Mary's. It was an outspoken attack on the doctrine and practice of the University, covering much the same ground as Section IV of the sermon on Scriptural Christianity, preached in 1744, for which John Wesley was excluded thereafter from the pulpit of St. Mary's, but expressed in much more violent language. The Deists are branded as 'the first-born of Satan'; Tillotson and Bull are criticized by name as having endeavoured to 'sap the very foundation of our Church' by their teaching on justification and holiness; 'the faith of a devil and the life of a heathen make up what most men call a *good Christian*' in Oxford. Levity in College chapel, Sabbath-breaking, novel-reading and gambling, idleness ('O what is so scarce as learning save religion!' he exclaims), non-observance of the Statutes, perjury in the subscription to the Articles and Homilies of the Church, are all vehemently denounced, to say nothing of the loss of the very notion of religion. There was much justification for what Wesley proposed to say; but undoubtedly her ladyship's advice was prudent. Consequently he decided to preach The

Almost Christian, and re-wrote it for the occasion in his rooms at Lincoln College. He published it later in the year.

No wonder there was a large congregation. Since his last appearance in St. Mary's three years before, John Wesley had become the best known and the most abused man in England. He had been excluded from all the churches in London save four ; he had begun the practice of preaching in the open air ; he had founded the ' Societies ' which were the germ of the Methodist Church ; his preaching had been attended by strange bodily convulsions both in London and Bristol ; he had acquired and opened for worship the Foundery on Windmill Hill, north-west of Finsbury Square ; love-feasts (the very name of which suggested all sorts of filthy attacks), and watch-night services had been started ; laymen had been permitted to exhort and preach ; the papers were full of abuse of both Wesley and the Methodists. It is surprising that the University authorities allowed him to preach in St. Mary's ; it is not at all surprising that Oxford flocked to see and hear him.

It is hardly necessary to point out that the text will not bear Wesley's interpretation ; it may mean ' With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian ' ; or ' In a little time, &c. ' ; but certainly not ' Almost. ' And, even accepting the A.V. translation, Agrippa does not say ' Thou persuadest me to be an almost Christian, ' but ' Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian '—a very different thing. However, Wesley attempts no exposition of his text ; it is used merely as a motto, and ' poor Agrippa ' is thrown overboard before the vessel has weighed anchor, and is never picked up again. The phrase itself is doubtful English ; though Southey adopted the idiom and called himself ' an almost Quaker. '

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*Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.*—ACTS xxvi. 28.

AND many there are who go thus far : ever since the Christian religion was in the world, there have been many in every age and nation who were almost persuaded to be Christians. But seeing it avails nothing before God to go *only thus far*, it highly imports us to consider,—

- I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN BEING ALMOST,
- II. WHAT IN BEING ALTOGETHER, A CHRISTIAN.

I. (i.) 1. Now, in the being *almost a Christian* is implied, first, heathen honesty. No one, I suppose, will make any question of this, especially, since by heathen honesty here, I

mean, not that which is recommended in the writings of their philosophers only, but such as the common Heathens expected one of another, and many of them actually practised. By the rules of this they were taught that they ought not to be unjust ; not to take away their neighbour's goods, either by robbery or theft ; not to oppress the poor, neither to use extortion toward any ; not to cheat or overreach either the poor or rich, in whatsoever commerce they had with them ; to defraud no man of his right ; and, if it were possible, to owe no man anything.

2. Again : the common Heathens allowed, that some regard was to be paid to truth, as well as to justice. And, accordingly, they not only held him in abomination who was foresworn, who called God to witness to a lie ; but him also who was known to be a slanderer of his neighbour, who falsely accused any man. And, indeed, little better did they esteem wilful liars of any sort ; accounting them the disgrace of human kind, and the pests of society.

3. Yet again : there was a sort of love and assistance which they expected one from another. They expected whatever assistance any one could give another, without prejudice to himself. And this they extended not only to those little offices of humanity which are performed without any expense or labour, but likewise to the feeding the hungry, if they had food to spare ; the clothing the naked with their own superfluous raiment , and, in general, the giving, to any that needed, such things as they needed not themselves. Thus far, in the

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I. par. 1. Here and elsewhere Wesley uses 'heathen' in the sense of 'non-Christian'; the remarkable development of Foreign Missionary effort in the nineteenth century has affected the meaning of the word, so that we use it mainly of the peoples to whom Christian missionaries have been sent, and especially of those who, like the Polynesians, are not only non-Christian, but are also uncivilized and barbarous. But

in the eighteenth century it had no such connotation, and is constantly used of the Greeks and Romans, without any intention of reproach or blame. So that we must beware of thinking that Wesley is sneering at Horace or Aristotle, when he speaks of them as 'the heathen poet' and 'the heathen moralist' respectively. It is of the ethics of the Greeks and Romans that he is thinking in this section of the sermon.

lowest account of it, heathen honesty went, the first thing implied in the being *almost a Christian*.

(ii.) 4. A second thing implied in the being *almost a Christian* is, the having a form of godliness, of that godliness which is prescribed in the gospel of Christ, the having the *outside of a real Christian*. Accordingly, the *almost Christian* does nothing which the gospel forbids. He taketh not the name of God in vain; he blesseth, and curseth not, he sweareth not at all, but his communication is, yea, yea; nay, nay. He profanes not the day of the Lord, nor suffers it to be profaned, even by the stranger that is within his gates. He not only avoids all actual adultery, fornication, and uncleanness, but every word or look that either directly or indirectly tends thereto; nay, and all idle words, abstaining both from all detraction, backbiting, talebearing, evil speaking, and from 'all foolish talking and jesting'—*εὐτραπελία*, a kind of virtue in the heathen moralist's account—briefly, from all conversation that is not 'good to the use of edifying,' and that, consequently, 'grieves the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption.'

5. He abstains from 'wine wherein is excess', from revelings and gluttony. He avoids, as much as in him lies, all strife and contention, continually endeavouring to live peaceably with all men. And, if he suffer wrong, he avengeth not himself, neither returns evil for evil. He is no railer, no brawler, no scoffer, either at the faults or infirmities of his neighbour. He does not willingly wrong, hurt, or grieve any man; but in all things acts and speaks by that plain rule,

4. *εὐτραπελία* is the word used by St. Paul in Eph. v. 4, and translated in the A.V. and R.V. 'jesting.' Its proper meaning is 'witty, lively talk'; and in this sense Aristotle ('the heathen moralist') (*Eth. Nic.* ii. 7) makes it the virtuous mean between the vicious extremes of *βωμολοχία* (ribaldry) and *ἀγροικία* (boorish stupidity). But there is always a danger that wit should degenerate into impropriety, and

find its expression in the smoking-room story; and so the word itself became degraded in meaning. It is in this latter sense that St. Paul warns the Ephesians against it. Of true *εὐτραπελία* Wesley was himself a master; witness his famous retort on Beau Nash, 'Sir, I dare not judge of you by common report' (*Journal*, June 5, 1739).

5. This negative form of the Golden Rule is ascribed in the Talmud

‘Whatsoever thou wouldest not he should do unto thee, that do not thou to another.’

6. And in doing good, he does not confine himself to cheap and easy offices of kindness, but labours and suffers for the profit of many, that by all means he may help some. In spite of toil or pain, ‘whatsoever his hand findeth to do, he doeth it with all his might’; whether it be for his friends, or for his enemies, for the evil, or for the good. For being ‘not slothful’ in this, or in any ‘business,’ as he ‘hath opportunity’ he doeth ‘good,’ all manner of good, ‘to all men’; and to their souls as well as their bodies. He reproves the wicked, instructs the ignorant, confirms the wavering, quickens the good, and comforts the afflicted. He labours to awaken those that sleep; to lead those whom God hath already awakened to the ‘Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness,’ that they may wash therein and be clean; and to stir up those who are saved through faith, to adorn the gospel of Christ in all things.

7. He that hath the form of godliness uses also the means of grace; yea, all of them, and at all opportunities. He constantly frequents the house of God, and that, not as the manner of some is, who come into the presence of the Most High, either loaded with gold and costly apparel, or in all the gaudy vanity of dress, and either by their unseasonable civilities to each other, or the impertinent gaiety of their behaviour, disclaim all pretensions to the form as well as to the power of godliness. Would to God there were none even among ourselves who fall under the same condemnation! who come into this house, it may be, gazing about, or with all the

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(*Sabb.* xxxi. 1) to Hillel; ‘whatsoever,’ he is reported to have said, ‘is hateful to thyself, do not to another. This is the whole law; all the rest is the unfolding of its meaning.’ But in the next paragraph Wesley assumes that his typical ‘almost Christian’ also obeys the rule in the positive form in which our Lord enunciates it in *Matt.* vii. 12.

7. There are numerous articles in the *Spectator* on the common im-

proprieties of behaviour in church. For one example: in No. 460, August 18, 1712, Steele speaks of ‘the ceremonies, bows, curtsies, whisperings, smiles, winks, nods, with other familiar arts of salutation, which take up in our churches so much time that might be better employed’; and satirizes those who after being at church ‘shall give a particular account how two or three hundred people were dressed.’

signs of the most listless, careless indifference, though sometimes they may *seem* to use a prayer to God for His blessing on what they are entering upon, who, during that awful service, are either asleep, or reclined in the most convenient posture for it, or, as though they supposed God was asleep, talking with one another, or looking round, as utterly void of employment. Neither let these be accused of the form of godliness. No, he who has even this, behaves with seriousness and attention, in every part of that solemn service. More especially, when he approaches the table of the Lord, it is not with a light or careless behaviour, but with an air, gesture, and deportment which speaks nothing else but 'God be merciful to me a sinner!'

8. To this, if we add the constant use of family prayer, by those who are masters of families, and the setting times apart for private addresses to God, with a daily seriousness of behaviour; he who uniformly practises this outward religion, has the form of godliness. There needs but one thing more in order to his being *almost a Christian*, and that is, sincerity.

(iii.) 9. By sincerity I mean, a real, inward principle of religion, from whence these outward actions flow. And, indeed, if we have not this, we have not heathen honesty, no, not so much of it as will answer the demand of a heathen Epicurean poet. Even this poor wretch, in his sober intervals, is able to testify,

*Oderunt peccare boni, virtutis amore ;  
Oderunt peccare mali, formidine poenae.*

So that, if a man only abstains from doing evil in order to

9. The 'heathen Epicurean poet' is Horace; the quotation is taken from *Ep.* I. xvi. 52, but is evidently given from memory; it should be:

*Oderunt peccare boni virtutis amore ;  
Tu nihil admittes in te formidine poenae.*

i.e. 'The good hate to sin through love of virtue; you, on the contrary, commit no crime that will tell against you through dread of punish-

ment.' Horace's point is that a man who refrains from crime because he is afraid of the penalty is not a good man at all, and has his reward in full in escaping it. Just before this passage (lines 46-8) a slave says to the poet, 'I am not a thief or runaway'; Horace answers, 'You have your reward (*Habes pretium*); you shall not be flogged.' The slave continues, 'I have not killed a man'; and the

avoid punishment, *Non pascas in cruce corvos*, saith the Pagan ; there, 'thou hast thy reward.' But even he will not allow such a harmless man as this to be so much as a *good Heathen*. If, then, any man, from the same motive, viz. to avoid punishment, to avoid the loss of his friends, or his gain, or his reputation, should not only abstain from doing evil, but also do ever so much good ; yea, and use all the means of grace ; yet we could not with any propriety say, this man is even *almost a Christian* ! If he has no better principle in his heart, he is only a hypocrite altogether.

10. Sincerity, therefore, is necessarily implied in the being *almost a Christian* ; a real design to serve God, a hearty desire to do His will. It is necessarily implied, that a man have a sincere view of pleasing God in all things ; in all his conversation ; in all his actions, in all he does or leaves undone. This design, if any man be *almost a Christian*, runs through the whole tenor of his life. This is the moving principle, both in his doing good, his abstaining from evil, and his using the ordinances of God.

11. But here it will probably be inquired, 'Is it possible that any man living should go so far as this, and, nevertheless, be *only almost a Christian* ? What more than this can be

reply is, '*Non pascas in cruce corvos*' — 'You shall not be hung on the cross to feed the crows.' Wesley fairly represents Horace's position ; but it is hardly correct to describe him as 'an Epicurean' ; as Sir Theodore Martin says, 'His taste was as catholic in philosophy as in literature. He was of no school, but sought in the teachings of them all such principles as would make life easier, better, and happier.' And surely he would have smiled if he could have foreseen that one day he would be called by a young Oxford don a poor wretch with some few 'sober intervals' !

11. Wesley is in this point the victim of his severe logic. He argues : No one is a Christian who has not

saving faith, working by love to God and man.

A man can be imagined who is absolutely moral and sincere, but who has not this faith and love.

Therefore such a man is not a Christian.

This is incontestable ; but the point Wesley fails to observe is that there never was and never could be such a man as he describes. If there were, the whole argument of the Epistle to the Romans is falsified. St. Paul affirms the impossibility of any man keeping the law of God without the grace which comes through faith ; but Wesley's almost Christian has succeeded where Paul himself confesses to utter failure ; 'to will is present with me, but to



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2 implied in the being a *Christian altogether*? I answer, first, that it is possible to go thus far, and yet be but almost a Christian, I learn, not only from the oracles of God, but also from the sure testimony of experience.

12. Brethren, great is 'my boldness towards you in this behalf.' And 'forgive me this wrong,' if I declare my own folly upon the house-top, for yours and the gospel's sake.—Suffer me, then, to speak freely of myself, even as of another man. I am content to be abased, so ye may be exalted, and to be yet more vile for the glory of my Lord.

13. I did go thus far for many years, as many of this place can testify; using diligence to eschew all evil, and to have a conscience void of offence, redeeming the time, buying up every opportunity of doing all good to all men, constantly

do that which is good is not.' The seventh chapter of Romans is the true account of the man who tries sincerely to keep the law without the saving grace of God. Indeed, as St. Paul says to the Galatians, 'If righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nought.' Wesley knew this well enough, and in Sermon IX, ii. 7, speaking of one who is trying to live a perfect moral life, he says, 'Though he strive with all his might, he cannot conquer; Sin is mightier than he. He resolves against sin, but yet sins on.' But in this sermon he is so concerned to show that the root of Christianity is faith, realized in conscious experience, that he forgets what he had said in Sermon I, ii. 2, 'Ye are saved (to comprise all in one word) from sin. This is the salvation which is through faith.' Jesus came to save His people from their sins; not primarily to give them a new experience. True, it is only through that new experience that they can be saved from their sins; but the experience is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. Wesley pictures

a man who has achieved the end without the means, which is impossible; and then argues that this fictitious person is not a Christian.

Moreover, can it be said without absurdity that one who lives the life described in par. 6 has no love for man; or that one who has 'a real design to serve God, a hearty desire to do His will,' and through whose whole life the principle runs of 'a sincere view of pleasing God in all things,' has neither faith in God nor love for Him?

The conclusion of the sermon is sound—that no man can be a Christian in the scriptural sense without saving faith; but it is equally true that no man could live such a life as Wesley here describes without saving faith. Theoretically the two things may be considered apart; practically they are inseparable, as being respectively cause and effect.

12. 'Yet more vile': see note in *Journal*, Standard edition, ii. 172.

13. Wesley's description of himself in *Journal*, January 29, 1738, agrees with this paragraph. 'I, who went to America to convert

and carefully using all the public and all the private means of grace ; endeavouring after a steady seriousness of behaviour, at all times, and in all places , and, God is my record, before whom I stand, doing all this in sincerity , having a real design to serve God ; a hearty desire to do His will in all things ; to please Him who had called me to ' fight the good fight,' and to ' lay hold on eternal life.' Yet my own conscience beareth me witness in the Holy Ghost, that all this time I was but *almost a Christian*.

II. If it be inquired, ' What more than this is implied in the being *altogether a Christian* ? ' I answer,

(i.) 1. First, The love of God. For thus saith His word, ' Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and

others, was never myself converted to God ' ; but later he added a note, ' I am not sure of this.' And again, ' I am a child of wrath, an heir of hell,' to which the note is later added, ' I believe not.' In another note he says, ' I had even then the faith of a *servant*, though not that of a *son*.' Writing to his brother Samuel five months after his conversion, he says, ' I was not a Christian till the 24th of May last past.' But in January 1739 he says (*Journal*, January 4, 1739), ' My friends affirm I am mad, because I said I was not a Christian a year ago. I affirm I am not a Christian now ' ; and after giving his reasons, which are really that he does not realize continuously the ideal of Christian experience set forth in the New Testament, he reiterates once and again, ' I am not a Christian.' He fails to see that the experience set forth there is an ideal to be aimed at and approximated to ever more perfectly ; and that Paul never dreamed of saying, ' I am not a Christian ' because he was conscious that he had not yet attained, neither was as yet made

perfect. Wesley's own sane criticism of his error should be read along with what he says here ; in Sermon CVI, On Faith, par. 11, he says : ' Indeed, nearly fifty years ago, when the Preachers, commonly called Methodists, began to preach salvation by faith, they were not sufficiently apprised of the difference between a servant and a child of God. They did not clearly understand that every one " that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted of Him." They frequently asked those who feared God, " Do you know that your sins are forgiven ? " and upon their answering " No," immediately replied, " Then you are a child of the devil." No ; that does not follow. It might have been said (and it is all that can be said with propriety), " Hitherto you are only a *servant*, you are not a *child* of God." ' Now surely a servant of God may be properly called a Christian ; and it is a misuse of language to say that Wesley during his years of earnest devotion at Oxford, and whilst he was ministering in Georgia, was not a Christian.

with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.' Such a love [of God] is this, as engrosses the whole heart, as takes up all the affections, as fills the entire capacity of the soul, and employs the utmost extent of all its faculties. He that thus loves the Lord his God, his spirit continually 'rejoiceth in God his Saviour.' His delight is in the Lord, his Lord and his All, to whom 'in everything he giveth thanks. All his desire is unto God, and to the remembrance of His name.' His heart is ever crying out, 'Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee.' Indeed, what can he desire beside God? Not the world, or the things of the world: for he is 'crucified to the world, and the world crucified to him.' He is crucified to 'the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, and the pride of life.' Yea, he is dead to pride of every kind: for 'love is not puffed up'; but 'he that dwelling in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him,' is less than nothing in his own eyes.

(ii.) 2. The second thing implied in the being *altogether a Christian* is, the love of our neighbour. For thus said our Lord, in the following words, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' If any man ask, 'Who is my neighbour?' we reply, Every man in the world, every child of His who is the Father of the spirits of all flesh. Nor may we in any wise except our enemies, or the enemies of God and their own souls. But every Christian loveth these also as himself, yea, 'as Christ loved us.' He that would more fully understand what manner of love this is, may consider St. Paul's description of it. It is 'long-suffering and kind.' It 'envieth not.' It is not rash or hasty in judging. It 'is not puffed up', but maketh him that loves, the least, the servant, of all. Love 'doth not behave itself unseemly', but becometh 'all things to all men.' She 'seeketh not her own'; but only the good of others, that they may be saved. 'Love is not provoked.' It casteth out wrath, which he who hath is [not made perfect] in love. 'It thinketh no evil. It rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth. It covereth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.'

(iii.) 3. There is yet one thing more that may be separately

considered, though it cannot actually be separate from the preceding, which is implied in the being *altogether a Christian*; and that is the ground of all, even faith. Very excellent things are spoken of this throughout the oracles of God. 'Every one,' saith the beloved disciple, 'that believeth is born of God.' 'To as many as received Him, gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in His name.' And 'this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.' Yea, our Lord Himself declares, 'He that believeth in the Son hath everlasting life; and cometh not into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.'

4. But here let no man deceive his own soul. 'It is diligently to be noted, the faith which bringeth not forth repentance, and love, and all good works, is not that right living faith [which is here spoken of], but a dead and devilish one. For even the devils believe that Christ was born of a virgin; that He wrought all kinds of miracles, declaring Himself very God, that, for our sakes, He suffered a most painful death, to redeem us from death everlasting; that He rose again the third day; that He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of the Father, and at the end of the world shall come again to judge both the quick and dead. These articles of our faith the devils believe, and so they believe all that is written in the Old and New Testament. And yet for all this faith, they be but devils. They remain still in their damnable estate, lacking the very true Christian faith.'

5. 'The right and true Christian faith is' (to go on in the words of our own Church), 'not only to believe that Holy Scripture and the Articles of our Faith are true, but also to have a sure trust and confidence to be saved from everlasting damnation by Christ. It is a sure trust and confidence which a man hath in God, that, by the merits of Christ, his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God, whereof doth follow a loving heart, to obey His commandments.'

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II. 4. The quotation in this and the following paragraph is from the Homily on the Salvation of Man-kind, part iii; but Wesley has

abbreviated it somewhat, though without omitting anything of importance.

6. Now, whosoever has this faith, which 'purifies the heart' (by the power of God, who dwelleth therein) from pride, anger, desire, 'from all unrighteousness,' from 'all filthiness of flesh and spirit'; which fills it with love stronger than death, both to God and to all mankind, love that doeth the works of God, glorying to spend and to be spent for all men, and that endureth with joy, not only the reproach of Christ, the being mocked, despised, and hated of all men, but whatsoever the wisdom of God permits the malice of men or devils to inflict,—whosoever has this faith, thus working by love, is not almost only, but altogether, a Christian.

7. But who are the living witnesses of these things? I beseech you, brethren, as in the presence of that God before whom 'hell and destruction are without a covering—how much more the hearts of the children of men?'—that each of you would ask his own heart, 'Am I of that number? Do I so far practise justice, mercy, and truth, as even the rules of heathen honesty require? If so, have I the very *outside* of a Christian? the form of godliness? Do I abstain from evil—from whatsoever is forbidden in the written Word of God? Do I, whatever good my hand findeth to do, do it with my might? Do I seriously use all the ordinances of God at all opportunities? And is all this done with a sincere design and desire to please God in all things?'

8. Are not many of you conscious that you never came thus far, that you have not been even *almost a Christian*; that you have not come up to the standard of heathen honesty; at least, not to the form of Christian godliness?—much less hath God seen sincerity in you, a real design of pleasing Him in all things. You never so much as intended to devote all your words and works, your business, studies, diversions, to His glory. You never even designed or desired, that whatsoever you did should be done 'in the name of the Lord Jesus,' and as such should be 'a spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God through Christ.'

9. But, supposing you had, do good designs and good desires make a Christian? By no means, unless they are brought to good effect. 'Hell is paved,' saith one, 'with good intentions.'

The great question of all, then, still remains. Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart? Can you cry out, 'My God, and my All'? Do you desire nothing but Him? Are you happy in God? Is He your glory, your delight, your crown of rejoicing? And is this commandment written in your heart, 'That he who loveth God love his brother also'? Do you then love your neighbour as yourself? Do you love every man, even your enemies, even the enemies of God, as your own soul? as Christ loved you? Yea, dost thou believe that Christ loved thee, and gave Himself for thee? Hast thou faith in His blood? Believest thou the Lamb of God hath taken away thy sins, and cast them as a stone into the depth of the sea? that He hath blotted out the handwriting that was against thee, taking it out of the way, nailing it to His cross? Hast thou indeed redemption through His blood, even the remission of thy sins? And doth His Spirit bear witness with thy spirit, that thou art a child of God?

10. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who now standeth in the midst of us, knoweth, that if any man die without this faith and this love, good it were for him that he had never been born. Awake, then, thou that sleepest, and

9. This well-known proverb occurs in Whitlock's *Zootomia* (1654) in the form, 'It is a saying among divines that Hell is full of good intentions and meanings.' Herbert, *Jacula Prudentum*, p. 11 (1633), has, 'Hell is full of good meanings and wishes.' Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, II. xi, relates that Johnson quoted it: 'Sir, Hell is paved with good intentions.'

10. It might be supposed from the opening of this paragraph that Wesley thought it possible that such a person as his almost Christian might be damned. His logic compels such a conclusion from the premises; but, as so often happened, his common sense was too strong in the long run for his logic. In the *Minutes* of 1746 he lays it down that God has so much regard for the sin-

cerity of an unbeliever that 'if he persevere therein, God will infallibly give him faith.' And in the *Minutes* of 1747 he says, 'Men may have many good tempers, and a blameless life (speaking in a loose sense), by nature and habit, with preventing grace; and yet not have faith and the love of God. It is scarce possible for us to know all the circumstances relating to such persons, as to judge certainly concerning them. But this we know, if Christ is not revealed in them, they are not yet Christian believers.' The question is then asked: Q. 11. 'But what will become of them then, suppose they die in this state?' And the answer is: 'That is a supposition not to be made. They cannot die in this state. They must go backward or

call upon thy God : call in the day when He may be found. Let Him not rest, till He make His ' goodness to pass before thee ', till He proclaim unto thee the name of the Lord, ' The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin.' Let no man persuade thee, by vain words, to rest short of this prize of thy high calling. But cry unto Him day and night, who, ' while we were without strength, died for the ungodly,' until thou knowest in whom thou hast believed, and canst say, ' My Lord, and my God ! ' Remember, ' always to pray, and not

forward. If they continue to seek, they will surely find righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. We are confirmed in this belief by the many instances we have seen of such as these finding peace at the last hour. And it is not impossible but others may then be made partakers of like precious faith, and yet go hence without giving any outward proof of the change which God hath wrought.' Probably Wesley was thinking of his brother Samuel, who had strongly objected to his teaching on the subject of conscious assurance of salvation, and had been greatly disturbed by the reports of the fits and visions and other abnormal phenomena which had taken place ; so much so that in a letter to Mrs. Hutton of June 17, 1738, he says, ' I heartily pray God to stop the progress of this lunacy.' He died on November 6, 1739 ; and in *Journal*, November 21, 1739, Wesley records a visit to his widow, and says, ' We could not but rejoice at hearing from one who had attended my brother in all his weakness, that, several days before he went hence, God had given him a calm and full assurance of his interest in Christ. Oh may every one who opposes it be thus

convinced that this doctrine is of God ! '

Wesley's views on this whole subject underwent considerable modification as the years went on. On December 1, 1767, he records in his *Journal* : ' Being alone in the coach, I was considering several points of importance. And thus much appeared clear as the day :

' That a man may be saved who cannot express himself properly concerning Imputed Righteousness. Therefore, to do this is not necessary to salvation.

' That a man may be saved who has not clear conceptions of it (yea, that never heard the phrase). Therefore, clear conceptions of it are not necessary to salvation. Yea, it is not necessary to salvation to use the phrase at all.

' That a pious Churchman who has not clear conceptions even of Justification by Faith may be saved. Therefore, clear conceptions even of this are not necessary to salvation.

' That a Mystic who denies Justification by Faith (Mr. Law, for instance) may be saved. But if so, what becomes of *articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiae* ? ' [Luther's famous description of the doctrine of Justification by Faith ; the doc-

to faint,' till thou also canst lift up thy hand unto heaven, and declare to Him that liveth for ever and ever, 'Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee.'

II. May we all thus experience what it is to be, not almost only, but altogether Christians; being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus, knowing we have peace with God through Jesus Christ, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God; and having the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost given unto us!

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trine by which a church stands or falls.] 'If so, is it not high time for us

Projicere ampullas et sesquipedalia verba;

and to return to the plain word,  
"He that feareth God, and worketh

righteousness, is accepted with Him'''? The quotation is from Horace, *De Arte Poet.* 97, where the tragic poet, who wishes to affect the feelings of his audience, is described as 'throwing overboard florid language and words half a yard long.'



## SERMON III

### AWAKE, THOU THAT SLEEPEST

PREACHED ON SUNDAY, APRIL 4, 1742, BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY  
OF OXFORD

BY THE REV. CHARLES WESLEY, M.A.,  
STUDENT OF CHRIST CHURCH

WE may be thankful that Wesley included this sermon in his first four volumes, although it was not preached by him but by his brother Charles. It is the only sermon by Charles Wesley that was published during his lifetime, except that on *The Cause and Cure of Earthquakes*, written in 1750 (No. CXXIX in the later editions of *Wesley's Sermons*), and the only other examples of his pulpit eloquence are a dozen sermons published by his widow in 1816. On Trinity Sunday, May 28, 1738, a week after his conversion, he records in his journal, 'I then began writing my first sermon in the name of Christ my Prophet'—that is, his first sermon after his new experience; for he had been preaching frequently since his ordination in 1735, and some of his *Frederica* discourses are contained in Mrs. Wesley's volume. Until October 20, 1738, he always wrote his sermons in full, and read them from the manuscript; but on that day, being at St. Antholin's church at the corner of Budge Row and Watling Street, and finding the congregation very small, he 'thought of preaching extempore; and spake on Justification from Rom. iii. for three-quarters of an hour, without hesitation.' On February 11 of the next year he repeated the experiment at Islington Church, and preached on blind Bartimaeus 'without notes.' After he began his itinerant work, he almost always preached extempore; and, if Adam Clarke is to be trusted, he occasionally had his 'bad times'; but usually he spoke with great freedom and power, and Whitehead testifies that 'his sermons were generally more awakening and useful' than those of his brother John. Henry Moore thinks that even his University sermon 'falls short of many discourses which he delivered in the highways'; and says: 'Where only God and conscious sinners were before him, it seemed as if nothing could withstand the wisdom and power with which he spake: to use the expression of a pious

man, "It was all thunder and lightning." Again he says: 'John's preaching was all principles; Charles's was all aphorisms.' In 1766 John wrote to him: 'In connexion I beat you; but in strong, pointed sentences you beat me.' In other words, John was a logician; Charles a poet. In this and the Earthquake sermon no one can fail to admire the power of vivid description, the continuous and most telling use of scriptural phrases, the vehement note of personal appeal, the tremendous culminative effect of the successive short sentences, which come like a spray of bullets from a machine-gun. The bewildering swiftness of his rapier-play beats down his opponent's guard and does not allow him an instant to recover himself. He gains his point, not by dint of argument, but by the irresistible rush of the torrent of his emotion.

We have from the pen of Joseph Williams, a pious dissenter of Kidderminster, a description of a sermon preached in the open air at Bristol by Charles Wesley in September 1739: 'Standing on a table in a field, the preacher, with eyes and hands lifted up to heaven, prayed with uncommon fervour and fluency. He then preached about an hour in such a manner as I scarce ever heard any man preach. Though I have heard many a finer sermon according to the common taste or acceptance of sermons, I never heard any man discover such evident signs of a vehement desire, or labour so earnestly to convince his hearers, that they were all by nature in a sinful, lost, undone state. He showed how great a change faith in Christ would produce in the whole man. . . With uncommon fervour he acquitted himself as an ambassador of Christ. And although he used no notes, nor had anything in his hand but a Bible, yet he delivered his thoughts in a rich, copious variety of expression, and with so much propriety, that I could not observe anything incoherent or inanimate through the whole performance, which he concluded with singing, prayer, and the usual benediction.' He goes on to describe the evening meeting, in which Charles Wesley expounded part of the twelfth chapter of St. John 'in a sweet, savoury, spiritual manner,' and is filled with admiration of the fervent prayers and the heavenly singing which concluded the service. (*Meth. Mag.*, 1815, p. 457.)

This sermon was preached in St. Mary's before the University of Oxford on Sunday afternoon, April 4, 1742. Unfortunately, Charles's Journal is missing just at this time, but from John's we learn that Charles left London for Oxford on the previous Wednesday. John remained in London, and records: 'About two in the afternoon, being the time my brother was preaching at Oxford, before the University, I desired a few persons to meet with me and join in prayer.' Vicesimus Knox, in his *Lucubrations*, No. 131 (1780), complains of the dullness of the University sermons; 'and yet,' he says, 'when it is considered that the greater part of the audience in the University church

always consists of very young men and of the common parishioners, I know not whether this apology ' (viz. that these sermons are merely didactic) ' can fully justify the languor of a pulpit dissertation ' ; he thinks a ' lively and more energetic address to the hearers ' would be an improvement ; and laments that ' eloquence is less aimed at in academical pulpits than ingenious, erudite, and *inoffensive* disquisition.' He would not have found anything to complain of on this score in Charles Wesley's sermon !

In 1748 was published the *Foreigner's Companion through the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge*, by Matthew Salmon, one of the original members of the Holy Club, who later quarrelled with the Wesleys. On p. 25 he says : ' The times of the day the University go to this church, are ten in the morning and two in the afternoon on Sundays and holidays, the sermon usually lasting about half an hour. But when I happened to be in Oxford in 1742, Mr. Wesley, the Methodist, of Christ Church, entertained his audience two hours, and, having insulted and abused all degrees, from the highest to the lowest, was in a manner hissed out of the pulpit by the lads.' Charles Wesley in his Journal, April 15, 1750, quotes this passage ; and adds : ' And high time for them to do so, if the historian said true ; but, unfortunately for him, I measured the time by my watch, and it was within the hour ; I abused neither high nor low, as my sermon, in print, will prove ; neither was I hissed out of the pulpit, or treated with the least incivility, either by young or old. What, then, shall I say to my old high-Church friend, whom I once so much admired ? I must rank him among the apocryphal writers, such as the judicious Dr. Mather, the wary Bishop Burnet, and the most modest Mr. Oldmixon.' (Apparently Charles had been reading Pope's *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, published 1735 :

' From these the world will judge of men and books,  
Not from the Burnets, Oldmixons, and Cooks.')

The sermon was published by Strahan the same year and went through at least thirty-six editions. Thomas Jackson says : ' It is doubtful whether any sermon in the English language, or in any language upon earth, has passed through so many editions, or has been a means of so much spiritual good.'

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*Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.*—EPH. v. 14.

IN discoursing on these words, I shall, with the help of God,—

- I. DESCRIBE THE SLEEPERS, TO WHOM THEY ARE SPOKEN :
- II. ENFORCE THE EXHORTATION, 'AWAKE, THOU THAT SLEEPEST, AND ARISE FROM THE DEAD' AND,
- III. EXPLAIN THE PROMISE MADE TO SUCH AS DO AWAKE AND ARISE : 'CHRIST SHALL GIVE THEE LIGHT.'

I. 1. And first, as to the sleepers here spoken to. By sleep is signified the natural state of man ; that deep sleep of the soul, into which the sin of Adam hath cast all who spring from his loins , that supineness, indolence, and stupidity, that insensibility of his real condition, wherein every man comes into the world, and continues till the voice of God awakes him.

2. Now, 'they that sleep, sleep in the night.' The state of nature is a state of utter darkness ; a state wherein 'darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people.' The poor unawakened sinner, how much knowledge soever he may have as to other things, has no knowledge of himself : in this respect 'he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.' He knows not that he is a fallen spirit, whose only business in the present world is, to recover from his fall, to regain that image of God wherein he was created. He sees *no necessity* for the *one thing needful*, even that inward universal change, that 'birth from above,' figured out by baptism, which is the beginning of that

The text is quoted by St. Paul from some unknown source : 'Wherefore he saith.' Severian, who has been followed by many modern commentators, thinks it was a verse from an early Christian hymn :

Ἐγείρε, ὁ καθεύδων,  
καὶ ἀνάστα ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν,  
καὶ ἐπιφαύσει σοι ὁ Χριστός.

If so, it was most happily chosen

by the greatest of Christian hymn-writers as his text on this occasion.

I. par. 1. On original sin, see note on Sermon V, sec. i.

2. 'Birth from above.' This is the rendering of the phrase in John iii. 3, adopted by Coverdale and the Bishops' Bible of 1572. The more usual rendering is 'again.' The papyri furnish examples of both

total renovation, that sanctification of spirit, soul, and body, 'without which no man shall see the Lord.'

3. Full of all diseases as he is, he fancies himself in perfect health. Fast bound in misery and iron, he dreams that he is [happy and] at liberty. He says, 'Peace! Peace!' while the devil, as 'a strong man armed,' is in full possession of his soul. He sleeps on still, and takes his rest, though hell is moved from beneath to meet him; though the pit from whence there is no return hath opened its mouth to swallow him up. A fire is kindled around him, yet he knoweth it not, yea, it burns him, yet he lays it not to heart.

4. By one who sleeps, we are, therefore, to understand (and would to God we might all understand it!) a sinner satisfied in his sins, contented to remain in his fallen state, to live and die without the image of God; one who is ignorant both of his disease, and of the only remedy for it, one who never was warned, or never regarded the warning voice of God, 'to flee from the wrath to come', one that never yet saw he was in danger of hell-fire, or cried out in the earnestness of his soul, 'What must I do to be saved?'

5. If this sleeper be not outwardly vicious, his sleep is usually the deepest of all: whether he be of the Laodicean spirit, 'neither cold nor hot,' but a quiet, rational, inoffensive, good-natured professor of the religion of his fathers; or whether he be zealous and orthodox, and, 'after the most straitest sect of our religion,' live 'a Pharisee'; that is, according to the scriptural account, one that justifies himself; one that labours to establish his own righteousness, as the ground of his acceptance with God.

6. This is he, who, 'having a form of godliness, denies the power thereof', yea, and probably reviles it, wheresoever it is found, as mere extravagance and delusion. Meanwhile, the wretched self-deceiver thanks God, that he is 'not as

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meanings. Westcott, after a full discussion of the passage, decides in favour of 'again.'

It is observable that regeneration is here described (1) as figured out,

not effected, by baptism; (2) as the beginning, not the complete attainment, of sanctification. Cf. Sermon I, ii. 6.

other men are ; adulterers, unjust, extortioners ' ; no, he doeth no wrong to any man. He ' fasts twice in a week,' uses all the means of grace, is constant at church and sacrament ; yea, and ' gives tithes of all that he has ' ; does all the good that he can : ' touching the righteousness of the law,' he is ' blameless ' : he wants nothing of godliness, but the power ; nothing of religion, but the spirit ; nothing of Christianity, but the truth and the life.

7. But know ye not, that, however highly esteemed among men such a Christian as this may be, he is an abomination in the sight of God, and an heir of every woe which the Son of God, yesterday, to-day, and for ever, denounces against ' scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ' ? He hath ' made clean the outside of the cup and the platter,' but within is full of all filthiness. ' An evil disease cleaveth still unto him, so that his inward parts are very wickedness.' Our Lord fitly compares him to a ' painted sepulchre,' which ' appears beautiful without ' ; but, nevertheless, is ' full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.' The bones indeed are no longer dry ; the sinews and flesh are come upon them, and the skin covers them above but there is no breath in them, no Spirit of the living God. And, ' if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.' ' Ye are Christ's, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you ' : but, if not, God knoweth that ye abide in death, even until now.

8. This is another character of the sleeper here spoken to. He abides in death, though he knows it not. He is dead unto God, ' dead in trespasses and sins.' For, ' to be carnally minded is death.' Even as it is written, ' By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men ' ; not only temporal death, but likewise spiritual and eternal. ' In that day that thou eatest,' said God to Adam, ' thou shalt surely die ' not bodily (unless as he then became mortal), but spiritually thou shalt lose the life of thy soul, thou shalt die to God ; shalt be separated from Him, thy essential life and happiness.

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7. The ' sinews and flesh ' are taken to mean the outward form of religion.

9. Thus first was dissolved the vital union of our soul with God; insomuch that 'in the midst of' natural 'life, we are' now in spiritual 'death.' And herein we remain till the Second Adam becomes a quickening Spirit to us, till He raises the dead, the dead in sin, in pleasure, riches, or honours. But, before any dead soul can live, he 'hears' (hearkens to) 'the voice of the Son of God' he is made sensible of his lost estate, and receives the sentence of death in himself. He knows himself to be 'dead while he liveth', dead to God, and all the things of God; having no more power to perform the actions of a living Christian, than a dead body to perform the functions of a living man.

10. And most certain it is, that one dead in sin has not 'senses exercised to discern spiritual good and evil.' 'Having eyes, he sees not, he hath ears, and hears not.' He doth not 'taste and see that the Lord is gracious.' He 'hath not seen God at any time,' nor 'heard His voice,' nor 'handled the word of life.' In vain is the name of Jesus 'like ointment poured forth, and all His garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia.' The soul that sleepeth in death hath no perception of any objects of this kind. His heart is 'past feeling,' and understandeth none of these things.

11. And hence, having no spiritual senses, no inlets of spiritual knowledge, the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; nay, he is so far from receiving them, that whatsoever is spiritually discerned is mere foolishness unto him. He is not content with being utterly ignorant of spiritual things, but he denies the very existence of them. And spiritual sensation itself is to him the foolishness of folly. 'How,' saith he, 'can these things be? How can any man *know* that he is alive to God?' Even as you know that your body is now alive. Faith is the life of the soul, and if ye have this life abiding in you, ye want no marks to evidence it *to yourself*, but ἐλεγχος Πνεύματος, that divine consciousness, that

9. Cf. with this and the two following sections, Sermon XV. i. 6-10.

11. The phrase ἐλεγχος Πνεύματος does not occur in the New Testament.

It was probably suggested by John xvi. 8, 'He shall convict (ἐλέγξει) the world in respect of sin, &c.,' and Heb. xi. 1, 'Faith is the

witness of God, which is more and greater than ten thousand human witnesses.

12. If He doth not now bear witness with thy spirit, that thou art a child of God, O that He might convince thee, thou poor unawakened sinner, by His demonstration and power, that thou art a child of the devil! O that, as I prophesy, there might now be 'a noise and a shaking'; and may 'the bones come together, bone to his bone!' Then 'come from the four winds, O Breath! and breathe on these slain, that they may live!' And do not ye harden your hearts, and resist the Holy Ghost, who even now is come to convince you of sin, 'because you believe not on the name of the only begotten Son of God.'

II. 1. Wherefore, 'awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead.' God calleth thee now by my mouth, and bids thee know thyself, thou fallen spirit, thy true state and only concern below. 'What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise! Call upon thy God, if so be thy God will think upon thee, that thou perish not.' A mighty tempest is stirred up round about thee, and thou art sinking into the depths of perdition, the gulf of God's judgements. If thou wouldest escape them, cast thyself into them. 'Judge thyself, and thou shalt not be judged of the Lord.'

2. Awake, awake! Stand up this moment, lest thou 'drink at the Lord's hand the cup of His fury.' Stir up thyself to lay hold on the Lord, the Lord thy Righteousness, mighty to save! 'Shake thyself from the dust.' At least, let the earthquake of God's threatenings shake thee. Awake, and cry out with the trembling jailer, 'What must I do to be saved?' And never rest till thou believest on the Lord Jesus, with a faith which is His gift, by the operation of His Spirit.

ἀεὶ ὄρα of things not seen.' The preacher does not distinguish so accurately as his brother the witness of our own spirit and the witness of the Spirit of God.

12. 'Child of the devil.' But see note on Sermon II, i. 13.

II. 1. 'Cast thyself into them.' A curious application of the story of Jonah; as Jonah escaped the storm by being cast into the sea, so we, to escape God's judgements, must acquiesce in them, judge ourselves by His standards.



3. If I speak to any one of you, more than to another, it is to thee, who thinkest thyself unconcerned in this exhortation. 'I have a message from God unto thee.' In His name, I warn thee 'to flee from the wrath to come.' Thou unholy soul, see thy picture in condemned Peter, lying in the dark dungeon, between the soldiers, bound with two chains, the keepers before the door keeping the prison. The night is far spent, the morning is at hand, when thou art to be brought forth to execution. And in these dreadful circumstances, thou art fast asleep; thou art fast asleep in the devil's arms, on the brink of the pit, in the jaws of everlasting destruction!

4. O may the Angel of the Lord come upon thee, and the light shine into thy prison! And mayest thou feel the stroke of an Almighty Hand, raising thee, with, 'Arise up quickly, gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals, cast thy garment about thee, and follow Me.'

5. Awake, thou everlasting spirit, out of thy dream of worldly happiness! Did not God create thee for Himself? Then thou canst not rest till thou restest in Him. Return, thou wanderer! Fly back to thy ark. This is not thy home. Think not of building tabernacles here. Thou art but a stranger, a sojourner upon earth; a creature of a day, but just launching out into an unchangeable state. Make haste. Eternity is at hand. Eternity depends on this moment. An eternity of happiness, or an eternity of misery!

6. In what state is thy soul? Was God, while I am yet speaking, to require it of thee, art thou ready to meet death and judgement? Canst thou stand in His sight, who is of 'purer eyes than to behold iniquity'? Art thou 'meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light'? Hast thou 'fought a good fight, and kept the faith'? Hast thou secured the one thing needful? Hast thou recovered the image of God, even righteousness and true holiness? Hast

5. Compare Augustine, *Confessions*, I. 1: 'Thou hast created us for Thyself, and our heart is restless till it finds rest in Thee.' And John Wesley's translation of Tersteegen's hymn, 'Vergebne Gottes-

liebe du,' made at Savannah in 1736, and printed in *Psalms and Hymns*, 1738; Hymn 531 in the present Hymnbook.

My heart is pained, nor can it be  
At rest, till it finds rest in Thee.

thou put off the old man, and put on the new? Art thou clothed upon with Christ?

7. Hast thou oil in thy lamp? grace in thy heart? Dost thou 'love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength'? Is that mind in thee, which was also in Christ Jesus? Art thou a Christian indeed; that is, a new creature? Are old things passed away, and all things become new?

8. Art thou a 'partaker of the divine nature'? Knowest thou not that 'Christ is in thee, except thou be reprobate'? Knowest thou that God 'dwelleth in thee, and thou in God, by His Spirit, which He hath given thee'? Knowest thou not that 'thy body is a temple of the Holy Ghost, which thou hast of God'? Hast thou the witness in thyself? the earnest of thine inheritance? [Art thou sealed by that Spirit of Promise, unto the day of redemption?] Hast thou 'received the Holy Ghost'? Or dost thou start at the question, not knowing 'whether there be any Holy Ghost'?

9. If it offends thee, be thou assured, that thou neither art a Christian, nor desirest to be one. Nay, thy very prayer is turned into sin; and thou hast solemnly mocked God this very day, by praying for the inspiration of His Holy Spirit, when thou didst not believe there was any such thing to be received.

10. Yet, on the authority of God's Word, and our own Church, I must repeat the question, 'Hast thou received the Holy Ghost?' If thou hast not, thou art not yet a Christian. For a Christian is a man that is 'anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power.' Thou art not yet made a partaker of pure religion and undefiled. Dost thou know what religion

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9. The reference is to the Collect at the beginning of the Communion Service: 'Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit.'

10. 'Anointed with the Holy Ghost.' Evidently a reminiscence of Acts x. 38; it is said there, not of every Christian, but of our Lord. This is the sort of slip which can

hardly be avoided at times by one whose memory is so richly stored with Scripture phrases as Charles Wesley's was. The late Dr. Pope was usually very happy in his use of Scripture; but once in the Didsbury Chapel he is reported to have said, speaking of the providential care of God, 'Yes, brethren, we are not ignorant of his devices.' Then sud-

is?—that it is a participation of the divine nature; the life of God in the soul of man; Christ formed in the heart; ‘Christ in thee, the hope of glory’; happiness and holiness; heaven begun upon earth; ‘a kingdom of God within thee; not meat and drink,’ no outward thing; ‘but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost’, an everlasting kingdom brought into thy soul; a ‘peace of God, that passeth all understanding’; a ‘joy unspeakable, and full of glory’?

11. Knowest thou, that ‘in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith that worketh by love’, but a new creation? Seest thou the necessity of that inward change, that spiritual birth, that life from the dead, that holiness? And art thou thoroughly convinced, that without it no man shall see the Lord? Art thou labouring after it?—‘giving all diligence to make thy calling and election sure,’ ‘working out thy salvation with fear and trembling,’ ‘agonizing to enter in at the strait gate’? Art thou in earnest about thy soul? And canst thou tell the Searcher of hearts, ‘Thou, O God, art the thing that I long for! Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I *would* love Thee!’

12. Thou hopest to be saved, but what reason hast thou to give of the hope that is in thee? Is it because thou hast done no harm? or, because thou hast done much good? or, because thou art not like other men, but wise, or learned, or honest, and morally good; esteemed of men, and of a fair reputation? Alas! all this will never bring thee to God. It is in His account lighter than vanity. Dost thou know Jesus Christ, whom He hath sent? Hath He taught thee, that ‘by grace we are saved through faith; and that not of ourselves:

denly recollecting the context, he ejaculated in horror, ‘I beg your pardon!’ The next quotation is even less appropriate. ‘Pure religion’ should rather be translated ‘Pure and undefiled religious service, or observance’; and it is defined, in contradistinction to the Pharisaic idea of ecclesiastical ceremonial, as ‘visiting the fatherless

and the widow,’ &c. The passage has no relation to the main contention of this paragraph.

11. ‘Agonizing.’ Charles Wesley takes this as the closest representative in English of the Greek *ἀγωνίζεσθε* in Luke xiii. 24. In the *Notes* John translates it, ‘Agonize. Strive as in an agony.’ But none of the English versions has dared to adopt it.

it is the gift of God : not of works, lest any man should boast ' ? Hast thou received the faithful saying, as the whole foundation of thy hope, ' that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners ' ? Hast thou learned what that meaneth, ' I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance ? I am not sent, but unto the lost sheep ' ? Art thou (he that heareth, let him understand !) lost, dead, *damned already* ? Dost thou know thy deserts ? Dost thou feel thy wants ? Art thou ' poor in spirit ' ? mourning for God, and refusing to be comforted ? Is the prodigal ' come to himself,' and well content to be therefore thought ' beside himself ' by those who are still feeding upon the husks which he hath left ? Art thou willing to live godly in Christ Jesus ? And dost thou therefore suffer persecution ? Do men say all manner of evil against thee falsely, for the Son of Man's sake ?

13. O that in all these questions ye may hear the voice that wakes the dead , and feel that hammer of the Word, which breaketh the rocks in pieces ! ' If ye will hear His voice to-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts.' Now, ' awake, thou that sleepest ' in spiritual death, that thou sleep not in death eternal ! Feel thy lost estate, and ' arise from the dead.' Leave thine old companions in sin and death. Follow thou Jesus, and let the dead bury their dead. ' Save thyself from this untoward generation.' ' Come out from among them, and be thou separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and the Lord shall receive thee.' ' Christ shall give thee light.'

III. 1. This promise, I come, lastly, to explain. And how encouraging a consideration is this, that whosoever thou art, who obeyest His call, thou canst not seek His face in vain ! If thou even now ' awakest, and arisest from the dead,' He hath bound Himself to ' give thee light.' ' The Lord shall give thee grace and glory ', the light of His grace here, and the light of His glory when thou receivest the crown that fadeth not away. ' Thy light shall break forth as the morning, and thy darkness be as the noon-day ' ' God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shall shine in thy heart , to

give the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' 'On them that fear the Lord shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings.' And in that day it shall be said unto thee, 'Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.' For Christ shall reveal Himself in thee: and He is the true Light.

2. God is light, and will give Himself to every awakened sinner that waiteth for Him, and thou shalt then be a temple of the living God, and Christ shall 'dwell in thy heart by faith' and, 'being rooted and grounded in love, thou shalt be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of that love of Christ which passeth knowledge,' [that thou mayest be filled with all the fullness of God.]

3. Ye see your calling, brethren. We are called to be 'an habitation of God through His Spirit'; and, through His Spirit dwelling in us, to be saints here, and partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. So exceeding great are the promises which are given unto us, actually given unto us who believe! For by faith 'we receive, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God'—the sum of all the promises—'that we may know the things that are freely given to us of God.'

4. The Spirit of Christ is that great gift of God which, at sundry times, and in divers manners, He hath promised to man, and hath fully bestowed since the time that Christ was glorified. Those promises, before made to the fathers, He hath thus fulfilled 'I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes' (Ezek. xxxvi. 27). 'I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring' (Isa. xlv. 3).

5. Ye may all be living witnesses of these things, of remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. 'If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.' 'Who among you is there that feareth the Lord, and yet walketh 'in darkness, and hath no light'? I ask thee, in the name of Jesus, Believest thou that His arm is not shortened at all?

that He is still mighty to save ? that He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever ? that He hath now power on earth to forgive sins ? ' Son, be of good cheer , thy sins are forgiven.' God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven thee. Receive this, ' not as the word of man ; but as it is indeed, the word of God ', and thou art justified freely through faith. Thou shalt be sanctified also through faith which is in Jesus, and shalt set to thy seal, even thine, that ' God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.'

6. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you ; and suffer ye the word of exhortation, even from one the least esteemed in the Church. Your conscience beareth you witness in the Holy Ghost, that these things are so, if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. ' This is eternal life, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom He hath sent.' This experimental knowledge, and this alone, is true Christianity. He is a Christian who hath received the Spirit of Christ. He is not a Christian who hath not received Him. Neither is it possible to have received Him, and not know it.

III. 6. ' Neither is it possible,' &c. But John Wesley wrote to his brother Samuel on October 23, 1738, five months after his conversion, ' This witness of the Spirit I have not.' He writes again in November, ' This witness, I believe, is necessary for my salvation. How far invincible ignorance may excuse others, I know not.' The question is proposed in *Minutes*, August 2, 1745 (Charles being present): ' Q. 1. Is an assurance of God's pardoning love absolutely necessary to our being in His favour ? ' The gist of the answers is: ' (1) There may be exempt cases ; (2) We incline to think it is not necessary to outward holiness ; (3) In regard to Papists, Quakers, and others who deny that they have it, love hopeth all things ; (4) As to those who die without it, we determine nothing ; we leave his soul in the hands of Him that made it ; (5)

We allow that there may be infinite degrees in seeing God.' The question is discussed again in *Minutes*, June 16, 1747. After proving that the doctrine of assurance is scriptural, he asks (Q. 10) whether matter of fact does not prove that justifying faith does not necessarily imply assurance ; and two cases are specifically mentioned under the disguise of initials. The answer is, ' This contains the very strength of the cause ' ; and the explanation which follows is not at all decisive. There may be exempt cases ; general doctrines must not be grounded on a few experiments ; a moral life does not prove that a man has faith ; we do not know enough to judge certainly about these persons. But if they have not conscious faith, they are not Christian believers ; yet it is not to be supposed that they can die in such a state. In 1745 John

'For, at that day' (when He cometh, saith our Lord), 'ye shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.' This is that 'Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you' (John xiv. 17).

7. The world cannot receive Him, but utterly rejecteth the Promise of the Father, contradicting and blaspheming. But every spirit which confesseth not this is not of God. Yea, 'this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come into the world, and even now it is in the world.'

Wesley writes to John Smith (probably a pseudonym for Thomas Secker), 'I will still believe, none is a true Christian till he experiences it,' i.e. the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, which none can have 'without perceiving it as clearly as he does the light of the sun.' But on the other hand, John Wesley, in a letter to Charles (*Works*, xii. 113), says, 'If justifying faith necessarily implies such an explicit assurance of pardon, then every one who has it not is under the wrath and under the curse of God. But this is a supposition contrary to Scripture as well as to experience.' In Sermon XLV (1767) he allows that there may be a real degree of long-suffering, of gentleness, of fidelity, meekness, temperance, before we have a testimony of our acceptance; though we are not to rest here, but continually to cry to God for the witness of the Spirit.

In a letter to Melville Horne, Fletcher's successor at Madeley, John Wesley says, 'When fifty years ago my brother Charles and I, in the simplicity of our hearts, told the good people of England that unless they *knew* their sins were forgiven, they were under the wrath and curse of God, I marvel, Melville, they did

not stone us! The Methodists, I hope, know better now; we preach assurance as we always did, as a common privilege of the children of God; but we do not enforce it, under the pain of damnation, denounced on all who enjoy it not.' (Southey's *Life of Wesley*, 1st ed., i. 295.)

Wesley is right in saying that this 'is the main doctrine of the Methodists.' Christianity is not a creed nor a system of ethics; it is an experience, and therefore must be experienced. But he allows that there are degrees in this experience; and if he had more explicitly admitted that through prejudice, or ignorance, or false humility, or temperament, different people may describe their experience in different terms; and if he had not at times complicated the question by his anxiety to determine what will happen to good people who die without having felt able to profess that they enjoyed a definite assurance of salvation, it is hard to see how any objection to his doctrine could be maintained.

7. The temptation to call his opponents names is one to which an impassioned orator is peculiarly liable. The word Antichrist is only used by St. John, and he employs it in a perfectly definite sense. It is

He is Antichrist whosoever denies the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, or that the indwelling Spirit of God is the common privilege of all believers, the blessing of the gospel, the unspeakable gift, the universal promise, the criterion of a real Christian.

8. It nothing helps them to say, 'We do not deny the *assistance* of God's Spirit, but only this *inspiration*, this *receiving the Holy Ghost*, and being *sensible* of it. It is only this *feeling* of the Spirit, this being *moved* by the Spirit, or *filled* with it, which we deny to have any place in sound religion.' But, in *only denying this*, you deny the whole Scriptures, the whole truth, and promise, and testimony of God.

9. Our own excellent Church knows nothing of this devilish distinction, but speaks plainly of 'feeling the Spirit of Christ'; of being 'moved by the Holy Ghost' and knowing and 'feeling there is no other name than that of Jesus,' whereby we can receive life and salvation. She teaches us all to pray for the 'inspiration of the Holy Spirit'; yea, that we may be 'filled with the Holy Ghost.' Nay, and every Presbyter of hers professes to receive the Holy Ghost by the imposition of hands. Therefore, to deny any of these, is, in effect, to renounce the Church of England, as well as the whole Christian revelation.

10. But 'the wisdom of God' was always 'foolishness with men.' No marvel, then, that the great mystery of the gospel should be now also 'hid from the wise and prudent,' as well as in the days of old, that it should be almost univer-

'he who denies that Jesus is the Messiah'; it is the spirit 'which confesseth not that Jesus is from God'; it is exhibited by those 'who do not confess Jesus the Messiah coming in flesh.' There is no justification for applying it as the preacher does here.

9. The references are as follows :

Article xvii : The doctrine of Election is full of comfort 'to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ.'

Office for Ordering of Deacons : 'Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this Office and Ministration ?'

Order for Visitation of Sick : 'The Almighty Lord make thee know and feel that there is none other Name under heaven given to man, in whom, and through whom, thou mayest receive health and salvation, but only the name of our Lord Jesus.'

Order for Holy Communion : 'Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit.'

Order for Confirmation : 'Strengthen them . . . with the Holy Ghost the Comforter.'

Office for Ordering of Priests : 'Receive the Holy Ghost for the Office and Work of a Priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the Imposition of our hands.'



sally denied, ridiculed, and exploded, as mere frenzy ; and that all who dare avow it still are branded with the names of madmen and enthusiasts ! This is ' that falling away ' which was to come ; that general apostasy of all orders and degrees of men, which we even now find to have overspread the earth. ' Run to and fro in the streets of Jerusalem, and see if ye can find a man,' a man that loveth the Lord his God with all his heart, and serveth Him with all his strength. How does our own land mourn (that we look no farther) under the overflowings of ungodliness ! What villanies of every kind are committed day by day ; yea, too often with impunity, by those who sin with a high hand, and glory in their shame ! Who can reckon up the oaths, curses, profaneness, blasphemies, the lying, slandering, evil-speaking, the Sabbath-breaking, gluttony, drunkenness, revenge, the whoredoms, adulteries, and various uncleanness ; the frauds, injustice, oppression, extortion, which overspread our land as a flood ?

II. And even among those who have kept themselves pure from these grosser abominations, how much anger and pride, how much sloth and idleness, how much softness and effeminacy, how much luxury and self-indulgence, how much covetousness and ambition, how much thirst of praise, how much love of the world, how much fear of man, is to be found ! Meanwhile, how little of true religion ! For, where is he that loveth either God or his neighbour, as He hath given

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10. The word ' enthusiast ' was almost always used in the eighteenth century in the sense of ' one who holds extravagant and visionary religious opinions,' ' one who pretends to special divine illumination.' No term of abuse was more often applied to the early Methodists. Horace Walpole, in a letter dated October 10, 1766, in describing a sermon by John Wesley, says, ' Towards the end he exalted his voice, and acted very ugly enthusiasm ' ; in other words, he appealed to the feelings of his hearers—a terrible lapse from the good form which was the crown

of all the virtues with the correct eighteenth-century wits. For a more detailed denunciation of the sins of the time, see *Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, Part II, sec. ii.

The ' falling away ' is a quotation from 2 Thess. ii. 8. Whatever St. Paul meant by it, he was certainly not thinking of the eighteenth century. But there has hardly ever been an earnest reformer since the beginning of the Christian era who has not thought that he was living in the days of the great Apostasy !

us commandment ? On the one hand, are those who have not so much as the form of godliness, on the other, those who have the form only : there stands the *open*, there the *painted*, sepulchre. So that in very deed, whosoever were earnestly to behold any public gathering together of the people (I fear those in our churches are not to be excepted), might easily perceive, 'that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees' : the one having almost as little concern about religion, as if there were 'no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit', and the other making it a mere lifeless form, a dull round of external performances, without either true faith, or the love of God, or joy in the Holy Ghost !

12. Would to God I could except *us* of this place ! 'Brethren, my heart's desire, and prayer to God, for you is, that ye may be saved' from this overflowing of ungodliness ; and that here may its proud waves be stayed ! But is it so indeed ? God knoweth, yea, and our own consciences, it is not. Ye have not kept yourselves pure. Corrupt are we also and abominable, and few are there that understand any more ; few that worship God in spirit and in truth. We, too, are 'a generation that set not our hearts aright, and whose spirit cleaveth not steadfastly unto God.' He hath appointed us indeed to be 'the salt of the earth : but if the salt hath lost its savour, it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden underfoot of men.'

13. And 'shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord ? Shall not My soul be avenged on such a nation as this ?' Yea, we know not how soon He may say to the sword, 'Sword, go through this land !' He hath given us long space to repent. He lets us alone this year also but He warns and awakens us by thunder. His judgements are abroad in the earth, and we have all reason to expect the heaviest of all, even that He 'should come unto us quickly, and remove our candlestick out of its place, except we repent and do the first works', unless we return to the principles of the Reformation, the

12. 'This place' is, of course, the University of Oxford. For a fuller and more severe indictment of it,

see the latter part of Sermon IV and Sermon CXXXIV.

truth and simplicity of the gospel. Perhaps we are now resisting the last effort of divine grace to save us. Perhaps we have wellnigh 'filled up the measure of our iniquities,' by rejecting the counsel of God against ourselves, and casting out His messengers.

14. O God, 'in the midst of wrath, remember mercy' ! Be glorified in our reformation, not in our destruction ! Let us 'hear the rod, and Him that appointed it' ! Now that Thy 'judgements are abroad in the earth,' let the inhabitants of the world 'learn righteousness' !

15. My brethren, it is high time for us to awake out of sleep before the 'great trumpet of the Lord be blown,' and our land become a field of blood. O may we speedily see the things that make for our peace, before they are hid from our eyes ! 'Turn Thou us, O good Lord, and let Thine anger cease from us. O Lord, look down from heaven, behold and visit this vine', and cause us to know 'the time of our visitation.' 'Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Thy name ! O deliver us, and be merciful to our sins, for Thy name's sake ! And so we will not go back from Thee. O let us live, and we shall call upon Thy name. Turn us again, O Lord God of Hosts ! Show the light of Thy countenance, and we shall be whole.'

'Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen !'

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15. England was engaged in a war against Spain. Vernon's attacks on Carthage and Santiago had miserably failed ; and Walpole, after twenty-one years of power, found himself on January 21, 1742, with a bare majority of three in the House, and resigned. Carteret and his 'drunken administration' came into

office ; and he threw himself with vigour into the war on behalf of Maria Theresa. Meanwhile, the Young Pretender was watching the course of events, and was preparing for the attempt to regain the throne, which came to a head in 1745. Well might the preacher look forward with anxiety into the future !

## SERMON IV

### SCRIPTURAL CHRISTIANITY

PREACHED AT ST. MARY'S, OXFORD, BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY,  
ON AUGUST 24, 1744

THIS was the last sermon preached before the University by Wesley. The Sunday sermons were preached at two in the afternoon, but the service on saints' days began at ten in the morning. As the hour booms from the Tom Tower of Christ Church on August 24 (St. Bartholomew's Day), 1744, a stately procession enters the venerable Church of St. Mary the Virgin, headed by the Esquire Bedel carrying the insignia of the Vice-Chancellor; next comes the Vice-Chancellor himself in his robes, followed by the preacher in full canonicals; after him walks the Proctors, and the Doctors of Divinity in all the glory of their scarlet—*capa et caputio coccineo induti*—bring up the rear. The vast congregation rises as they enter; and when they reach the centre of the church, the Vice-Chancellor bows to the preacher and moves to his throne, whilst John Wesley ascends the pulpit opposite. A hymn is sung, and the 'bidding prayer' is offered; and with no further preface the text is announced. 'And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.' We have four accounts by eye-witnesses of this memorable service, which shall be now given in full.

First let the preacher himself speak. In *Journal*, Tuesday, August 21, he says:

'I set out with a few friends for Oxford. On Wednesday my brother met us from Bristol.' Friday, 24 (St. Bartholomew's Day): 'I preached, I suppose the last time, at St. Mary's. Be it so. I am now clear of the blood of these men. I have fully delivered my own soul. The Beadle came to me afterwards and told me the Vice-Chancellor had sent him for my notes. I sent them without delay, not without admiring the wise providence of God. Perhaps few men of note would have given a sermon of mine the reading if I had put it into their hands; but by this means it came to be read, probably more than once, by every man of eminence in the University. I left Oxford about noon, preached at Wycombe [twenty-five miles south-east of Oxford] in the evening; and on Saturday, the 25th, returned to London.'

In *A Short History of the Methodists* (1781) he adds to the record from the *Journal*:

' And I am well pleased that it should be the very day on which, in the last century, near two thousand burning and shining lights were put out at one stroke [the reference is to the ejectment from their livings on August 24, 1662, of 2,000 clergymen, of whom Wesley's grandfather, John Westley, was one, because they refused to take the oath prescribed in the Act of Uniformity]. Yet what a wide difference is there between their case and mine ! They were turned out of house and home, and all that they had ; whereas I am only hindered from preaching, without any other loss ; and that in a kind of honourable manner ; it being determined that, when my next turn to preach came, they would pay another person to preach for me. And so they did twice or thrice, even to the time that I resigned my fellowship ' [which he did in 1751].

Charles Wesley, in his Journal, August 23, says :

' I went to Christ Church prayers with several of the brethren, who thought it strange to see men in surplices talking, laughing, and pointing, as in a play-house, the whole time of service. I got two or three hours' conference with my brother ; and found the spirit which had drawn us formerly in this place. I preached to a multitude of the brethren, gownsmen, and gentry from the races [it was the Oxford race-week] who filled our inn and yard. The strangers that intermeddled not with our joy seemed struck and astonished with it, whilst we admonished one another in psalms and hymns, &c. O that all the world had a taste for *our* diversion !! Friday, August 24.— I joined my brother in stirring up the Society. They did run well, till the Moravians turned them out of the way of God's ordinances. At ten I walked with my brother and Mr. Piers and Meriton [two clergymen who had just taken part in Wesley's first Conference in London] to St. Mary's, where my brother bore his testimony before a crowded audience, much increased by the racers. Never have I seen a more attentive congregation. They did not let a word slip them. Some of the Heads stood up the whole time, and fixed their eyes on him. If they can endure sound doctrine like his, he will surely leave a blessing behind him. The Vice-Chancellor sent after him, and desired his notes ; which he sealed up and sent immediately. We walked back in form, the little band of us four, for of the rest durst none join himself to us. I was a little diverted at the coyness of an old friend, Mr. Wells, who sat just before me, but took great care to turn his back upon me all the time, which did not hinder my seeing through him. At noon my brother set out for London, and I for Bristol.'

In the undergraduates' gallery was a student of Wadham, called Benjamin Kennicott, who through financial difficulties had come somewhat late to the University and was now twenty-five years of age. He afterwards became one of the most eminent of English Hebrew and Oriental scholars ; was Fellow of Exeter, Keeper of the Radcliffe Library, and Canon of Christ Church. His *Vetus Testamentum Hebraicum cum variis lectionibus* (1776–80) embodied the results of the collation of 615 MSS. and 52 printed editions of the Hebrew Bible, and gave a great impetus to the study of the text of the Old Testament. He wrote a full description of this service in a letter which

was published in the *Methodist Magazine*, January 1866, and from which I here copy :

'On Friday last, being St. Bartholomew's Day, the famous Methodist, Mr. John Wesley, Fellow of Lincoln College, preached before the University ; which being a matter of great curiosity at present, and may possibly be greater in its consequences, I shall be particular in the account of it. All that are Masters of Arts, and on the foundation of any College, are set down in a roll, as they take their degree, and in that order preach before the University, or pay three guineas for a preacher in their stead, and as no clergyman can avoid his turn, so the University can refuse none ; otherwise Mr. Wesley would not have preached. He came to Oxford some time before [three days only], and preached frequently every day in courts, public-houses, and elsewhere. On Friday morning, having held forth twice in private, at five and at eight [I fear most of us degenerate moderns, with such a service before us, would have stayed in bed to breakfast], he came to St. Mary's at ten o'clock. There were present the Vice-Chancellor, the proctors, most of the heads of houses, a vast number of gownsmen, and a multitude of private people, with many of his followers, both brethren and sisters, who, with general [this cannot be right ; I conjecture it is 'funeral'] faces and plain attire, came from around to attend their master and teacher. When he mounted the pulpit, I fixed my eyes on him and his behaviour. He is neither tall nor fat ; for the latter would ill become a Methodist. His black hair quite smooth, and parted very exactly ' [yes, Mr. Kennicott ; this man had a way of doing everything 'very exactly'], added to a peculiar composure in his countenance, showed him to be an uncommon man. His prayer was soft, short, and conformable to the rules of the University. [This rather suggests that he used a brief extempore prayer after the formal bidding prayer.] His text, Acts iv. 31 : " And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." And now he began to exalt his voice. He spoke the text very slowly, and with an agreeable emphasis. His introduction was to prove that the word *all* in the text was meant, not only of the apostles and those who received the extraordinary, but of others who received the ordinary influences (only) of the Holy Spirit ; and that of such there were many in the infancy of the gospel, persons who had no business to perform besides the reformation of their own lives, and therefore wanted the ordinary divine influences only, to refresh them in their conversion and complete their Christianity. And this he chose to do, because, if the Holy Ghost was necessary for men as private persons at first, it must be so in all ages. His division of the text was, first, to show the influence of Christianity in its infancy on individuals ; secondly, in its progress from one period to another ; thirdly, in its final completion in the universal conversion of the world to the Christian faith. Under these three heads he expressed himself like a very good scholar, but a rigid zealot ; and then he came to what he called his plain, practical conclusion. Here was what he had been preparing for all along ; and he fired his address with so much zeal and unbounded satire as quite spoiled what otherwise might have been turned to great advantage ; for as I liked some, so I disliked other parts of his discourse extremely. Having, under his third head, displayed the happiness of the world under it—complete final reformation—" Now," says he, " where is this Christianity to be found ?

Is this a Christian nation ? Is this a Christian city ?"—asserting the contrary to both. I liked some of his freedom ; such as calling the generalities of young gownsmen "a generation of triflers," and many other just invectives. But, considering how many shining lights are here that are the glory of the Christian cause, his sacred censure was much too flaming and strong and his charity much too weak in not making large allowances. But so far from allowances, that, after having summed up the measure of our iniquities he concluded with a lifted-up eye in this most solemn form : " It is time for Thee, Lord, to lay to Thine hand "—words full of such presumption and seeming imprecation, that they gave an universal shock. This, and the assertion that Oxford was not a Christian city, and this country not a Christian nation, were the most offensive parts of the sermon, except when he accused the whole body (and confessed himself to be one of the number) of the sin of perjury ; and for this reason, because, upon becoming member of a College, every person takes an oath to observe the statutes of the University, and no one observes them in all things. But this gave me no uneasiness ; for in every oath the intention of the legislator is the only thing you swear to observe ; and the legislators here mean that you shall observe all their laws, or upon the violation of them submit to the punishment required ; and this being explained in the statute-book given to every member, does, I think, solve the whole difficulty. Had these things been omitted, and his censures moderated, I think his discourse, as to style and delivery, would have been uncommonly pleasing to others as well as to myself. He is allowed to be a man of great parts, and that by the excellent Dean of Christ Church (Dr. Conybeare) ; for the day he preached, the dean generously said of him, " John Wesley will always be thought a man of sound sense, though an enthusiast." However, the Vice-Chancellor sent for the sermon, and I hear the heads of colleges intend to show their resentment.

Another youth was sitting in the body of the church amongst the Dons ; for though only twenty years of age, he had a year before this been elected a Fellow of All Souls. His name was William Blackstone, destined to fame as the author of the *Commentaries on the Laws of England* and a Judge of the realm. In a letter dated August 28, 1744, and reproduced in facsimile in Hurst's *History of Methodism*, vol. ii. p. 602, he says :

' We were last Friday entertained at St. Mary's by a curious sermon from Wesley the Methodist. Among other equally modest particulars he informed us, 1st That there was not one Christian among all the Heads of Houses ; 2dly, that pride, gluttony, avarice, luxury, sensuality, and drunkenness were the general characteristicks of all Fellows of Colleges, who were useless to a proverbial uselessness. Lastly, that the younger part of the University were a generation of triflers, all of them perjured, and not one of them of any religion at all. His notes were demanded by the Vice-Chancellor, but on mature deliberation it has been thought proper to punish him by a mortifying neglect.'

It is pleasant to find Wesley, quoting from his quondam critic, *thirty*

years afterwards, in his *Thoughts upon Slavery*, and describing him as 'that great ornament of his profession, Judge Blackstone.'

The sermon was published in October by Strahan, with a short preface, omitted in the collected editions: 'It was not my design, when I wrote, ever to print the latter part of the following sermon. But the false and scurrilous accounts of it which have been published, almost in every corner of the nation, constrain me to publish the whole, just as it was preached; that men of reason may judge for themselves.' Ezekiel xxxiii. 4 was prefixed to the sermon, 'Whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning,' &c.; but was omitted in the 1771 edition. Many separate editions of the sermon were issued; there are eleven in the Wesleyan Conference Office Library.

I do not know where to find in religious literature anything to rival the portrayal in the first three divisions of this sermon of Christian experience, Christian activity, and a Christian world. There is hardly a sentence which is not directly derived from the Scriptures; but the arrangement is so skilful that the impression is not of a pasticcio of texts, but of a full flood of impassioned eloquence. It is an example of the finest oratory, controlled by a strong logical sense, absolutely free from artificial ornaments, sincere as the light, but glowing with divine fire and fervour. And if the application is outspoken and severe, it never degenerates into vulgar abuse; there is no feeling as we read that Wesley is exploiting the sins of the University for the sake of an advertisement of himself; he must be faithful, but there is a strain of tenderness that is unmistakable; and it must not be forgotten that he did not mean to publish this part of his sermon. 'I love the very sight of Oxford,' he says, in *Plain Account of Kingswood School* (1781); 'I love the manner of life; I love and esteem many of its institutions.'

But his love did not blind him to its faults. In this same pamphlet, whilst he admits the learning of the professors, he points out that all that they do is to 'read now and then an ingenious lecture, perhaps three or four times a year. They read it in the public schools; but who hears? Often *vel duo vel nemo*.' Some of the tutors 'are men of eminent learning' and are persons 'of piety and diligence'; but there are many of another sort who are both ignorant and careless of the welfare of their students. The examinations and exercises are 'an idle, useless interruption of useful studies.' They are 'horribly, shockingly superficial,' 'an execrable insult upon common sense.' The undergraduates for the most part 'no more concern themselves with learning than with religion'; they are 'loungers and triflers.' The posthumously published Sermon CXXXIV, which was not actually preached, contains an even severer indictment. The evidence from the literature of the eighteenth century abundantly justifies Wesley's



criticisms. Things were at their worst just at this time (1744); and towards the end of the century they had begun to improve; possibly in part through the influence of his faithful dealing. The best commentary on this part of the sermon will be found in Godley's *Oxford in the Eighteenth Century* (1908); especially chapters iii—vi.

The Vice-Chancellor who sent for the notes of the sermon was William Hodges, Provost of Oriel, and 'a good scholar.' His objection to the sermon was probably not based on doctrinal grounds, but on the attack made in the presence of the undergraduates on the authorities of the University.

History repeats itself. Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, i. 58, says: 'Gladstone always remembered among the wonderful sights of his life, St. Mary's crammed in all parts by all orders when Mr. Bulteel, an outlying Calvinist, preached an accusatory sermon (some of it all too true) against the University.' Bulteel, like Wesley, was an open-air preacher; and lost his living on that account.

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*And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.*—ACTS iv. 31.

1. THE same expression occurs in the second chapter, where we read, 'When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all' (the Apostles, with the women, and the mother of Jesus, and His brethren) 'with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost' one immediate effect whereof was, they 'began to speak with other tongues', insomuch that both the Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and the other strangers who 'came together, when this was noised abroad, heard them speak, in their several tongues, the wonderful works of God' (Acts ii. 1-6).

2. In this chapter we read, that when the Apostles and brethren had been praying, and praising God, 'the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.' Not that we find any visible appearance here, such as had been in the former instance: nor are we informed that the *extraordinary gifts* of the Holy Ghost were then given to all or any of them; such as the gifts of 'healing, of working' other 'miracles, of prophecy, of dis-

cerning spirits, the speaking with divers kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues' (1 Cor. xii. 9, 10).

3. Whether these gifts of the Holy Ghost were designed to remain in the Church throughout all ages, and whether or no they will be restored at the nearer approach of the 'restitution of all things,' are questions which it is not needful to decide. But it is needful to observe this, that, even in the infancy of the Church, God divided them with a sparing hand. Were all even then prophets? Were all workers of miracles? Had all the gifts of healing? Did all speak with tongues? No, in no wise. Perhaps not one in a thousand. Probably none but the teachers in the Church, and only some of them (1 Cor. xii. 28-30). It was, therefore, for a more excellent purpose than this, that 'they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.'

4. It was, to give them (what none can deny to be essential to all Christians in all ages) the mind which was in Christ, those holy fruits of the Spirit, which whosoever hath not, is none of His; to fill them with 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness' (Gal. v. 22-24); to endue them with faith (perhaps it might be rendered *fidelity*), with meekness and temperance; to enable them to crucify the flesh, with its

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Par. 3. It is not possible to draw a hard-and-fast line between the so-called extraordinary and the ordinary gifts of the Spirit. The first are occasional and special; the second are common to all believers. But it is not true that the former ceased to be bestowed after the first three centuries. No student of foreign missions will deny that they are still imparted where the necessity arises. And the more important ones—the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, prophecy (i.e. the gift of inspired preaching, not necessarily involving the foretelling of the future), are as common now as in the primitive Church. Wesley speaks more fully on the subject in Sermon LXXXIX, The More Excellent Way, par. 2: 'It does not

appear that these extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were common in the Church for more than two or three centuries. The cause of this was not because there was no occasion for them because all the world was become Christian. The real cause was "the love of many," almost of all Christians, so-called, was "waxed cold." This was the real cause why the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were no longer to be found in the Christian Church; because the Christians were turned heathens again, and had only a dead form left.'

4. 'Fidelity.' Here, as often, Wesley anticipates the rendering of the Revisers, who have here 'faithfulness' in place of the A.V. 'faith.'

affections and lusts, its passions and desires ; and in consequence of that inward change, to fulfil all outward righteousness , to ' walk as Christ also walked,' in ' the work of faith, in the patience of hope, the labour of love ' (1 Thess. i. 3).

5. Without busying ourselves, then, in curious, needless inquiries, touching those *extraordinary* gifts of the Spirit, let us take a nearer view of these His *ordinary* fruits, which we are assured will remain throughout all ages ;—of that great work of God among the children of men, which we are used to express by one word, ' Christianity ', not as it implies a set of opinions, a system of doctrines, but as it refers to men's hearts and lives. And this Christianity it may be useful to consider under three distinct views :

I. AS BEGINNING TO EXIST IN INDIVIDUALS :

II. AS SPREADING FROM ONE TO ANOTHER

III. AS COVERING THE EARTH.

I design to close these considerations with a plain, practical application.

I. 1. And, first, let us consider Christianity in its rise, as beginning to exist in individuals.

Suppose, then, one of those who heard the Apostle Peter preaching repentance and remission of sins, was pricked to the heart, was convinced of sin, repented, and then believed in Jesus. By this faith of the operation of God, which was the very substance, or subsistence, of things hoped for (Heb. xi. 1), the demonstrative evidence of invisible things, he instantly received the Spirit of adoption, whereby he now cried, ' Abba, Father ' (Rom. viii. 15). Now first it was that he could call Jesus Lord, by the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. xii. 3), the Spirit itself bearing witness with his spirit, that he was a child of God (Rom. viii. 16). Now it was that he could truly say, ' I live not, but Christ liveth in me , and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me ' (Gal. ii. 20).

2. This, then, was the very essence of his faith, a divine *ἔλεγχος* (*evidence* or *conviction*) of the love of God the Father, through the Son of His love, to him a sinner, now accepted in

the Beloved. And, 'being justified by faith, he had peace with God' (Rom. v. 1), yea, 'the peace of God ruling in his heart', a peace which, passing all understanding (*πάντα νοῦν*, all barely rational conception), kept his heart and mind from all doubt and fear, through the knowledge of Him in whom he had believed. He could not, therefore, 'be afraid of any evil tidings', for his 'heart stood fast, believing in the Lord.' He feared not what man could do unto him, knowing the very hairs of his head were all numbered. He feared not all the powers of darkness, whom God was daily bruising under his feet. Least of all was he afraid to die, nay, he desired to 'depart, and to be with Christ' (Phil. i. 23), who, 'through death, had destroyed him that had the power of death, even the devil, and delivered them who, through fear of death, were all their life-time,' till then, 'subject to bondage' (Heb. ii. 15).

3. His soul, therefore, magnified the Lord, and his spirit rejoiced in God his Saviour. 'He rejoiced in Him with joy unspeakable,' who had reconciled him to God, even the Father; 'in whom he had redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.' He rejoiced in that witness of God's Spirit with his spirit, that he was a child of God, and more abundantly, 'in hope of the glory of God', in hope of the glorious image of God, and full renewal of his soul in righteousness and true holiness; and in hope of that crown of glory, that 'inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.'

4. 'The love of God was also shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which was given unto him' (Rom. v. 5). 'Because he was a son, God had sent forth the Spirit of His Son into his heart, crying, Abba, Father!' (Gal. iv. 6). And that filial love of God was continually increased by the witness he had in himself (1 John v. 10) of God's pardoning love to him, by 'beholding what manner of love it was which the Father had bestowed upon him, that he should be called a child of God' (1 John iii. 1). So that God was the desire of his eyes, and the joy of his heart; his portion in time and in eternity.

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I. 2. In spite of Lightfoot, I believe Wesley's interpretation is right. The peace of God is beyond the reach

of all merely intellectual processes; it cannot be attained by logical inference, but is the gift of the Spirit.

5. He that thus *loved* God could not but love his brother also ; and ' not in word only, but in deed and in truth.' ' If God,' said he, ' so loved us, we ought also to love one another ' (1 John iv. 11) , yea, every soul of man, as ' the mercy of God is over all His works ' (Ps. cxlv. 9). Agreeably hereto, the affection of this lover of God embraced all mankind for His sake , not excepting those whom he had never seen in the flesh, or those of whom he knew nothing more than that they were ' the offspring of God,' for whose souls His Son had died ; not excepting the ' evil ' and ' unthankful,' and least of all his enemies, those who hated, or persecuted, or despitefully used him for his Master's sake. These had a peculiar place, both in his heart and in his prayers. He loved them ' even as Christ loved us.'

6. And ' love is not puffed up ' (1 Cor. xiii. 4). It abases to the dust every soul wherein it dwells. Accordingly, he was lowly of heart, little, mean, and vile in his own eyes. He neither sought nor received the praise of men, but that which cometh of God only. He was meek and long-suffering, gentle to all, and easy to be entreated. Faithfulness and truth never forsook him ; they were ' bound about his neck, and wrote on the table of his heart.' By the same spirit he was enabled to be temperate in all things, refraining his soul even as a weaned child. He was ' crucified to the world, and the world crucified to him ' , superior to ' the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, and the pride of life.' By the same almighty love was he saved, both from passion and pride ; from lust and vanity , from ambition and covetousness , and from every temper which was not in Christ.

7. It may easily be believed, he who had this love in his heart would work no evil to his neighbour. It was ~~impossible~~ for him, knowingly and designedly, to do harm to any man. He was at the greatest distance from cruelty and wrong, from any unjust or unkind action. With the same care did he ' set a watch before his mouth, and keep the door of his lips,' lest he should offend in tongue, either against justice, or against mercy or truth. He put away all lying, falsehood, and fraud , neither was guile found in his mouth. He spake evil of no man , nor did an unkind word ever come out of his lips.

8. And as he was deeply sensible of the truth of that word, 'Without Me ye can do nothing,' and, consequently, of the need he had to be watered of God every moment; so he continued daily in all the ordinances of God, the stated channels of His grace to man 'in the Apostles' doctrine,' or teaching, receiving that food of the soul with all readiness of heart, in 'the breaking of bread,' which he found to be the communion of the body of Christ; and 'in the prayers' and praises offered up by the great congregation. And thus, he daily 'grew in grace,' increasing in strength, in the knowledge and love of God.

9. But it did not satisfy him, barely to abstain from doing evil. His soul was athirst to do good. The language of his heart continually was, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." My Lord went about doing good, and shall not I tread in His steps? As he had opportunity, therefore, if he could do no good of a higher kind, he fed the hungry, clothed the naked, helped the fatherless or stranger, visited and assisted them that were sick or in prison. He gave all his goods to feed the poor. He rejoiced to labour or to suffer for them, and whereinsoever he might profit another, there especially to 'deny himself.' He counted nothing too dear to part with for them, as well remembering the word of his Lord, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me' (Matt. xxv. 40).

10. Such was Christianity in its rise. Such was a Christian in ancient days. Such was every one of those who, when they heard the threatenings of the chief priests and elders, 'lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and were all filled with

8. It is curious that neither here, nor in par. i. 10 below, nor in Sermon XII, ii. 1, on The Means of Grace, is 'the fellowship,' in which these first converts are said to have continued, as much as mentioned; and yet John Wesley was the founder of the class-meeting and the band. The explanation is found in the *Notes on the New Testament*, where he interprets the fellowship to mean 'having all things common'; a

narrow and quite inadequate way of regarding it. Some modern commentators (e.g. Hort and Zockler) adopt this view; but the majority take the word to mean 'co-operation in the widest sense, including fellowship in sympathy, suffering, and toil,' as well as mutual material help.

10. It is to be observed in regard to the communism of the Church at Jerusalem, (1) that it was not compulsory. From Acts v. 4 it is clear

the Holy Ghost. The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul': so did the love of Him in whom they had believed constrain them to love one another. 'Neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common' so fully were they crucified to the world, and the world crucified to them. 'And they continued steadfastly with one accord in the Apostles' doctrine, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayer' (Acts ii. 42). 'And great grace was upon them all: neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the Apostles' feet and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need' (Acts iv. 31-35).

II. 1. Let us take a view, in the second place, of this Christianity, as spreading from one to another, and so gradually making its way into the world for such was the will of God concerning it, who did not 'light a candle to put it under a bushel, but that it might give light to all that were in the house.' And this our Lord had declared to His first disciples, 'Ye are the salt of the earth,' 'the light of the world'; at the same time that He gave that general command, 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven' (Matt. v. 13-16).

2. And, indeed, supposing a few of these lovers of mankind to see 'the whole world lying in wickedness,' can we believe they would be unconcerned at the sight, at the misery of those for whom their Lord died? Would not their bowels yearn over them, and their hearts melt away for very trouble? Could they then stand idle all the day long, even were there no command from Him whom they loved? Rather, would they not labour, by all possible means, to pluck some of these

that both before and after the sale of his possession, it was quite open to Ananias to do as he thought best with it; (2) that the realization of all their capital for immediate distribution was an economical mis-

take, however praiseworthy its motive; for in a very few years it became necessary for St. Paul to seek contributions all over the world for the poor saints at Jerusalem.

brands out of the burning? Undoubtedly they would: they would spare no pains to bring back whomsoever they could of those poor 'sheep that had gone astray, to the great Shepherd and Bishop of their souls' (1 Pet. ii. 25).

3. So the Christians of old did. They laboured, having opportunity, 'to do good unto all men' (Gal. vi. 10), warning them to flee from the wrath to come; now, now to escape the damnation of hell. They declared, 'The times of ignorance God winked at, but now He calleth all men everywhere to repent' (Acts xvii. 30). They cried aloud, Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, 'so iniquity shall not be your ruin' (Ezek. xviii. 30). They 'reasoned' with them of 'temperance, and righteousness,' or justice—of the virtues opposite to their reigning sins, 'and of judgement to come'—of the wrath of God which would surely be executed on evil-doers in that day when He should judge the world (Acts xxiv. 25).

4. They endeavoured herein to speak to every man severally as he had need. To the careless, to those who lay unconcerned in darkness and in the shadow of death, they thundered, 'Awake, thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.' But to those who were already awakened out of sleep, and groaning under a sense of the wrath of God, their language was, 'We have an Advocate with the Father; He is the propitiation for our sins.' Meantime, those who had believed, they provoked to love and to good works, to patient continuance in well-doing; and to abound more and more in that holiness without which no man can see the Lord (Heb. xii. 14).

5. And their labour was not in vain in the Lord. His word ran and was glorified. It grew mightily and prevailed. But so much the more did offences prevail also. The world in general were offended, 'because they testified of it, that the works thereof were evil' (John vii. 7). The men of pleasure

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II. 3. 'Winked at.' In the *Notes on the New Testament* Wesley adopts the much better rendering 'overlooked'; which is that of the R.V.

4. 'Awake, thou that sleepest.'

No doubt Wesley had in his mind that this was the text from which Charles Wesley had preached his great sermon in St. Mary's two years before.



were offended, not only because these men were made, as it were, to reprove their thoughts. 'He professeth,' said they, 'to have the knowledge of God, he calleth himself the child of the Lord; his life is not like other men's, his ways are of another fashion, he abstaineth from our ways, as from filthiness, he maketh his boast, that God is his Father' (Wis. ii. 13-16), but much more, because so many of their companions were taken away, and would no more 'run with them to the same excess of riot' (1 Pet. iv. 4). The men of reputation were offended, because, as the gospel spread, they declined in the esteem of the people; and because many no longer dared to give them flattering titles, or to pay man the homage due to God only. The men of trade called one another together, and said, 'Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth: but ye see and hear that these men have persuaded and turned away much people, so that this our craft is in danger to be set at nought' (Acts xix. 25, &c.). Above all, the men of religion, so called, the men of *outside* religion, 'the saints of the world,' were offended, and ready at every opportunity to cry out, 'Men of Israel, help! We have found these men pestilent fellows, movers of sedition throughout the world' (Acts xxiv. 5). 'These are the men that teach all men everywhere against the people, and against [the law]' (Acts xxi. 28).

6. Thus it was that the heavens grew black with clouds, and the storm gathered amain. For the more Christianity spread, the more hurt was done, in the account of those who received it not, and the number increased of those who were more and more enraged at these men who thus 'turned the world upside down' (Acts xvii. 6); insomuch that more and more cried out, 'Away with such fellows from the earth; it is not fit that they should live'; yea, and sincerely believed, that whosoever should kill them would do God service.

7. Meanwhile they did not fail to 'cast out their name as evil' (Luke vi. 22), so that 'this sect was everywhere spoken against' (Acts xxviii. 22). Men said all manner of evil of them,

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5. How many modern Methodists ever read the Apocrypha? At all events, it is to our great loss that

we are not familiar with the Book of Wisdom and the First Book of Maccabees.

even as had been done of the prophets that were before them (Matt. v. 12). And whatsoever any would affirm, others would believe ; so that offences grew as the stars of heaven for multitude. And hence arose, at the time foreordained of the Father, persecution in all its forms. Some, for a season, suffered only shame and reproach ; some, ' the spoiling of their goods ' , ' some had trial of mocking and scourging , some of bonds and imprisonment ' ; and others ' resisted unto blood ' (Heb. x. 34 ; xi. 36, &c.).

8. Now it was that the pillars of hell were shaken, and the kingdom of God spread more and more. Sinners were everywhere ' turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.' He gave His children ' such a mouth, and such wisdom, as all their adversaries could not resist ' ; and their lives were of equal force with their words. But above all, their sufferings spake to all the world. They ' approved themselves the servants of God, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in perils in the sea, in perils in the wilderness, in weariness and painfulness, in hunger and in thirst, in cold and nakedness ' (2 Cor. vi. 4, &c.). And when, having fought the good fight, they were led as sheep to the slaughter, and offered up on the sacrifice and service of their faith, then the blood of each found a voice, and the Heathen owned, ' He being dead, yet speaketh.'

9. Thus did Christianity spread itself in the earth. But how soon did the tares appear with the wheat, and the *mystery of iniquity* work, as well as the *mystery of godliness* ! How soon did Satan find a seat, even *in the temple of God*, ' till the woman fled into the wilderness,' and ' the faithful were again diminished from the children of men ' ! Here we tread a beaten

9. The reference is to 2 Thess. ii. 4, which Wesley in the *Notes on the New Testament* interprets as a prophecy of the pretensions of the Pope of Rome. But here he seems to accept the more probable interpretation, which sees in it a reference to the claims to divine power and worship made by the Roman Emperors. The flight of the woman

into the wilderness (Rev. xii. 6) is generally interpreted to mean the flight of the Christian Church of Jerusalem into Peraea, when the Romans besieged the city in A.D. 70 ; but in the *Notes* Wesley explains it as prefiguring the preservation of the Protestant Church in Bohemia and other trans-Danubian countries of Europe during the Middle Ages.

path the still increasing corruptions of the succeeding generations have been largely described, from time to time, by those witnesses God raised up, to show that He had 'built His Church upon a rock, and the gates of hell should not' wholly 'prevail against her' (Matt. xvi. 18).

III. 1. But shall we not see greater things than these? Yea, greater than have been yet from the beginning of the world. Can Satan cause the truth of God to fail, or His promises to be of none effect? If not, the time will come when Christianity will prevail over all, and cover the earth. Let us stand a little, and survey (the third thing which was proposed) this strange sight, a *Christian world*. Of this the prophets of old inquired and searched diligently (1 Pet. i. 10, 11, &c.) of this the Spirit which was in them testified 'It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. . . And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more' (Isa. ii. 2, 4). 'In that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, which shall stand for an Ensign of the people, to it shall the Gentiles seek: and His rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set His hand again to recover the remnant of His people, and He shall set up an Ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth' (Isa. xi. 10-12). 'The wolf shall then dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. They shall not hurt nor destroy, saith the Lord, in all My holy mountain for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea' (Isa. xi. 6-9).

2. To the same effect are the words of the great Apostle, which it is evident have never yet been fulfilled. 'Hath God cast away His people? God forbid. But through their fall

salvation is come to the Gentiles. And if the diminishing of them be the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fullness? For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in: and so all Israel shall be saved' (Rom. xi. 1, 11, 12, 25, 26).

3. Suppose now the fullness of time to be come, and the prophecies to be accomplished: What a prospect is this! All is peace, 'quietness, and assurance for ever.' Here is no din of arms, no 'confused noise,' no 'garments rolled in blood.' 'Destructions are come to a perpetual end': wars are ceased from the earth. Neither are there any intestine jars remaining, no brother rising up against brother; no country or city divided against itself, and tearing out its own bowels. Civil discord is at an end for evermore, and none is left either to destroy or hurt his neighbour. Here is no oppression to 'make' even 'the wise man mad'; no extortion to 'grind the face of the poor'; no robbery or wrong; no rapine or injustice; for all are 'content with such things as they possess.' Thus 'righteousness and peace have kissed each other' (Ps. lxxxv. 10), they have 'taken root and filled the land', 'righteousness flourishing out of the earth'; and 'peace looking down from heaven.'

4. And with righteousness or justice, mercy is also found. The earth is no longer full of cruel habitations. The Lord hath destroyed both the blood-thirsty and malicious, the envious and revengeful man. Were there any provocation, there is none that now knoweth to return evil for evil; but indeed there is none that doeth evil, no, not one: for all are harmless as doves. And being filled with peace and joy in believing, and united in one body, by one Spirit, they all love as brethren, they are all of one heart and of one soul. 'Neither saith any of them, that aught of the things which he possesseth is his own.' There is none among them that lacketh; for every man loveth his neighbour as himself. And all walk by one rule: 'Whatever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do unto them.'

5. It follows, that no unkind word can ever be heard among

them, no strife of tongues, no contention of any kind, no railing or evil-speaking, but every one 'opens his mouth with wisdom, and in his tongue there is the law of kindness.' Equally incapable are they of fraud or guile: their love is without dissimulation: their words are always the just expression of their thoughts, opening a window into their breast, that whosoever desires may look into their hearts, and see that only love and God are there.

6. Thus, where the Lord Omnipotent taketh to Himself His mighty power and reigneth, doth He 'subdue all things to Himself,' cause every heart to overflow with love, and fill every mouth with praise. 'Happy are the people that are in such a case: yea, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God' (Ps. cxliv. 15). 'Arise, shine,' saith the Lord; 'for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. Thou hast known that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty God of Jacob. I have made thy officers peace, and thy exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders, but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation and thy gates Praise. Thy people are all righteous, they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified. The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee, but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory' (Isa. lx. 1, 16-19, 21).

IV Having thus briefly considered Christianity, as beginning, as going on, and as covering the earth, it remains only that I should close the whole with a plain, practical application.

1. And, first, I would ask, Where does this Christianity now exist? Where, I pray, do the Christians live? Which is the country, the inhabitants whereof are all thus filled with the Holy Ghost?—are all of one heart and of one soul; cannot suffer one among them to lack anything, but continually give to every man as he hath need, who, one and all, have the love of God filling their hearts, and constraining them to love

their neighbour as themselves, who have all 'put on bowels of mercy, humbleness of mind, gentleness, long-suffering'—who offend not in any kind, either by word or deed, against justice, mercy, or truth; but in every point do unto all men, as they would these should do unto them? With what propriety can we term any a Christian country, which does not answer this description? Why then, let us confess we have never yet seen a Christian country upon earth.

2. I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, if ye do account me a madman or a fool, yet, *as a fool bear with me*. It is utterly needful that some one should use great plainness of speech towards you. It is more especially needful at *this* time; for who knoweth but it is the *last*? Who knoweth how soon the righteous Judge may say, 'I will no more be entreated for this people'? 'Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in this land, they should but deliver their own souls.' And who will use this plainness, if I do not? Therefore I, even I, will speak. And I adjure you, by the living God, that ye steel not your breasts against receiving a blessing at *my* hands. Do not say in your hearts, *Non persuadebis, etiamsi persuaseris*, or, in other words, Lord, Thou shalt not *send by whom Thou wilt send*; let me rather perish in my blood, than be saved by this man!

3. Brethren, 'I am persuaded better things of you, though I thus speak.' Let me ask you then, in tender love, and in the spirit of meekness, Is this city a Christian city? Is Christianity, scriptural Christianity, found here? Are we, considered as a community of men, so 'filled with the Holy Ghost,' as to enjoy in our hearts, and show forth in our lives,

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IV. 2. Wesley was well aware of the strong prejudice against him, especially in Oxford. His preaching in the open air, the extraordinary physical convulsions which had resulted from his preaching, and his doctrine of the witness of the Spirit as the common privilege of believers, were universally stigmatized as the marks of a dangerous fanaticism; and his founding of the Methodist Societies, and his setting-up of

preaching-houses in London and Bristol, seemed to show that he was intending to organize his followers into a new sect of Dissenters, in spite of all his protest to the contrary.

'Thou shalt not persuade me, even though thou hast persuaded me.' This seems to be an Iambic Senarian; I have not been able to find it in Plautus or Terence. It may be from one of Seneca's tragedies.

the genuine fruits of that Spirit? Are all the Magistrates, all Heads and Governors of Colleges and Halls, and their respective Societies (not to speak of the inhabitants of the town), 'of one heart and one soul'? Is 'the love of God shed abroad in our hearts'? Are our tempers the same that were in Him? And are our lives agreeable thereto? Are we 'holy as He who hath called us is holy in all manner of conversation'?

4. I entreat you to observe, that here are no peculiar notions now under consideration, that the question moved is not concerning *doubtful opinions* of one kind or another, but concerning the undoubted, fundamental branches (if there be any such) of our common Christianity. And for the decision thereof, I appeal to your own consciences, guided by the Word of God. He therefore that is not condemned by his own heart, let him go free.

5. In the fear, then, and in the presence of the great God, before whom both you and I shall shortly appear, I pray you that are in authority over us, whom I reverence for your office's sake, to consider (and not after the manner of dissemblers with God), are you 'filled with the Holy Ghost'? Are you lively portraitures of Him whom ye are appointed to represent among men? 'I have said, Ye are Gods,' ye magistrates and rulers, ye are by office so nearly allied to the God of heaven! In your several stations and degrees, ye are to show forth unto us 'the Lord our Governor.' Are all the thoughts of your hearts, all your tempers and desires, suitable to your high calling? Are all your words like unto those which come out of the mouth of God? Is there in all your actions dignity and love?—a greatness which words cannot express, which can flow only from a heart 'full of God'; and yet consistent with the character of 'man that is a worm, and the son of man that is a worm'?

6. Ye venerable men, who are more especially called to form the tender minds of youth, to dispel thence the shades of ignorance and error, and train them up to be wise unto salvation, are you 'filled with the Holy Ghost'? with all those 'fruits of the Spirit,' which your important office so indispensably requires? Is your heart whole with God? full of

love and zeal to set up His kingdom on earth? Do you continually remind those under your care, that the one rational end of all our studies, is to know, love, and serve 'the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent'? Do you inculcate upon them day by day, that love alone never faileth (whereas, whether there be tongues, they shall fail, or philosophical knowledge, it shall vanish away), and that without love, all learning is but splendid ignorance, pompous folly, vexation of spirit? Has all you teach an actual tendency to the love of God, and of all mankind for His sake? Have you an eye to this end in whatever you prescribe, touching the kind, the manner, and the measure of their studies, desiring and labouring that, wherever the lot of these young soldiers of Christ is cast, they may be so many burning and shining lights, adorning the gospel of Christ in all things? And permit me to ask, Do you put forth all your strength in the vast work you have undertaken? Do you labour herein with all your might? exerting every faculty of your soul, using every talent which God hath lent you, and that to the uttermost of your power?

7. Let it not be said, that I speak here, as if all under your care were intended to be clergymen. Not so, I only speak as if they were all intended to be Christians. But what example is set them by us who enjoy the beneficence of our forefathers? by Fellows, Students, Scholars, more especially those who are of some rank and eminence? Do ye, brethren, abound in the fruits of the Spirit, in lowliness of mind, in self-denial and mortification, in seriousness and composure of spirit, in patience, meekness, sobriety, temperance; and in unwearied, restless endeavours to do good in every kind unto all men, to relieve their outward wants, and to bring their souls to the true knowledge and love of God? Is this the general character of Fellows of Colleges? I fear it is not. Rather, have not

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7. Nicholas Amherst, of St. John's, writes in 1726: 'When any person is chosen Fellow of a College, he immediately becomes a freeholder, and is settled for life in ease and plenty. He wastes the rest of his days in

luxury and idleness; he enjoys himself and is dead to the world; for a senior Fellow of a College lives and moulders away in a supine and regular course of eating, drinking, sleeping, and cheating the juniors.'



pride and haughtiness of spirit, impatience and peevishness, sloth and indolence, gluttony and sensuality, and even a proverbial uselessness, been objected to us, perhaps not always by our enemies, nor wholly without ground? O that God would roll away this reproach from us, that the very memory of it might perish for ever!

8. Many of us are more immediately consecrated to God, called to minister in holy things. Are we then patterns to the rest, 'in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity' (1 Tim. iv. 12)? Is there written on our forehead and on our heart, 'Holiness to the Lord'? From what motives did we enter upon this office? Was it indeed with a single eye 'to serve God, trusting that we were inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon us this ministration, for the promoting of His glory, and the edifying of His people'? And have we 'clearly determined, by God's grace, to give ourselves wholly to this office'? Do we forsake and set aside, as much as in us lies, all worldly cares and studies? Do we apply ourselves wholly to this one thing, and draw all our cares and studies this way? Are we apt to teach? Are we taught of God, that we may be able to teach others also? Do we know God? Do we know Jesus Christ? Hath 'God revealed His Son in us'? And hath He 'made us able ministers of the new covenant'? Where then are the 'seals of our apostleship'? Who, that were dead in trespasses and sins, have been quickened by our word? Have we a burning zeal to save souls from death, so that for their sake we often forget even to eat our bread? Do we speak plain, 'by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God' (2 Cor. iv. 2)? Are we dead to the world, and the things of the world, 'laying up all our treasure in heaven'? Do we lord over God's heritage? Or are we the least, the servants of all? When we bear the reproach of Christ, does it sit heavy upon us? Or do we rejoice therein? When we are smitten on the one cheek,

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8. 'Trusting that we were inwardly moved,' &c. This and the following quotations are from the

services for the Ordering of Deacons and of Priests.

do we resent it? Are we impatient of affronts? Or do we turn the other also, not resisting the evil, but overcoming evil with good? Have we a bitter zeal, inciting us to strive sharply and passionately with them that are out of the way? Or is our zeal the flame of love, so as to direct all our words with sweetness, lowliness, and meekness of wisdom?

9. Once more: what shall we say concerning the youth of this place? Have you either the form or the power of Christian godliness? Are you humble, teachable, advisable; or stubborn, self-willed, heady, and high-minded? Are you obedient to your superiors as to parents? Or do you despise those to whom you owe the tenderest reverence? Are you diligent in your easy business, pursuing your studies with all your strength? Do you redeem the time, crowding as much work into every day as it can contain? Rather, are ye not conscious to yourselves, that you waste away day after day, either in reading what has no tendency to Christianity, or in gaming, or in—you know not what? Are you better managers of your fortune than of your time? Do you, out of principle, take care to owe no man anything? Do you ‘remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy’, to spend it in the more immediate worship of God? When you are in His house, do you consider that God is there? Do you behave ‘as seeing Him that is invisible’? Do you know how to ‘possess your bodies in sanctification and honour’? Are not drunkenness and uncleanness found among you? Yea, are there not of you who ‘glory in their shame’? Do not many of you ‘take the name of God in vain,’ perhaps habitually, without either remorse or fear? Yea, are there not a multitude of you that are forsworn? I fear, a swiftly-increasing multitude. Be not surprised, brethren. Before God and this congregation, I own myself to have been of the number, solemnly swearing to observe all those customs, which I then knew nothing of; and those statutes, which I did not so much as read over, either then, or for some years after. What is perjury, if this

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9. This wholesale accusation of perjury is amplified in Sermon CXXXIV, ii. 9. As this shows, Wesley is mainly thinking of the chapter of the Statutes ‘De Moribus Conformandis.’ Now, each of the

is not? But if it be, O what a weight of sin, yea, sin of no common dye, lieth upon us! And doth not the Most High regard it?

10. May it not be one of the consequences of this, that so many of you are a generation of triflers; triflers with God, with one another, and with your own souls? For, how few of you spend, from one week to another, a single hour in private prayer! How few have any thought of God in the general tenor of your conversation! Who of you is in any degree acquainted with the work of His Spirit, His supernatural work in the souls of men? Can you bear, unless now and then in a church, any talk of the Holy Ghost? Would you not take it for granted, if one began such a conversation, that it was either hypocrisy or enthusiasm? In the name of the Lord God Almighty, I ask, what religion are you of? Even the talk of Christianity, ye cannot, will not bear. O my brethren, what a Christian city is this! 'It is time for Thee, Lord, to lay to Thine hand!'

11. For, indeed, what probability, what possibility, rather (speaking after the manner of men), is there that Christianity, scriptural Christianity, should be again the religion of this place? that all orders of men among us should speak and live as men 'filled with the Holy Ghost'? By whom should this Christianity be restored? By those of you that are in authority? Are you convinced then that this is scriptural Christianity? Are you desirous it should be restored? And do ye not count your fortune, liberty, life, dear unto yourselves, so ye may be instrumental in the restoring of it? But suppose ye have this desire, who hath any power propor-

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rules laid down there includes a penalty for the breach thereof; and Kennicott's criticism is a fair one, that the student swears to obey the statute *or to accept the penalty*. Something must also be allowed for the fact that some of the Statutes were made for conditions which no longer existed, and had become obsolete. But when all this is taken into consideration, it is not good that

men should swear to keep rules which they have no intention of observing. Sir W. Hamilton, *Disc. in Phil. and Lit.*, p. 401, charges against Oxford 'the systematic perjury so naturalized in a great seminary of religious education.' Still, the fault lies rather in the authorities demanding an oath which they well know the students are not expected to keep, than in the students themselves.

tioned to the effect? Perhaps some of you have made a few faint attempts, but with how small success! Shall Christianity then be restored by young, unknown, inconsiderable men? I know not whether ye yourselves could suffer it. Would not some of you cry out, 'Young man, in so doing thou reproachest us'? But there is no danger of your being put to the proof, so hath iniquity overspread us like a flood. Whom then shall God send?—the famine, the pestilence (the last messengers of God to a guilty land), or the sword, 'the armies of the' Romish 'aliens,' to reform us into our first love? Nay, 'rather let us fall into Thy hand, O Lord, and let us not fall into the hand of man.'

Lord, save, or we perish! Take us out of the mire, that we sink not! O help us against these enemies! for vain is the help of man. Unto Thee all things are possible. According to the greatness of Thy power, preserve Thou those that are appointed to die, and preserve us in the manner that seemeth to Thee good, not as we will, but as Thou wilt!

11. 'Young, unknown, and inconsiderable men.' Wesley is thinking of his associates in the Holy Club at Oxford. It is difficult for those of us who have been long engaged in a college or university to realize how our old pupils have grown up! They are still to us the young fellows we knew in their undergraduate days; and so Wesley and Whitefield doubtless appeared to the Oxford dons. In his *Farther Appeal* (1745) Wesley says: 'A very common exception taken against these is, and was from the beginning, that "they are so young." Perhaps they are not so young as you conceive. Mr. Whitefield is now upwards of thirty; my brother is thirty-seven years of age; I have lived above forty-two years.

Is it not possible that a person

of thirty or forty may have as true a judgement in the things of God as one of fifty or fourscore?'

'The armies of the Romish aliens.' In February the whole of England had been thrown into trepidation by the threat of a French invasion in the interests of the Young Pretender, and war was declared against France on March 29. Rumours were rife that the Methodists were plotting against the House of Hanover, and both John and Charles Wesley were summoned before the magistrates to prove their loyalty. Two of Wesley's helpers, John Nelson and John Downes, were pressed for military service; and Thomas Beard was pressed and lodged in jail at Newcastle, where he died.

## SERMON V

### JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

THIS sermon was first published in the volume of 1746. The *Journal* entry for October 6, 1739, at Gloucester, suggests, though it does not prove, that the sermon was first preached then: 'At five in the evening, I explained to about a thousand people the nature, the cause, and the condition or instrument of justification, from these words: "To him that worketh not," &c.' It was preached again at Markfield June 13, 1741, from his father's tombstone at Epworth on June 8, 1742, and doubtless on many subsequent occasions. It is a clear exposition of the doctrine of justification as held by St. Paul, by Luther, by the Reformed Church of England, and substantially by all the Protestant Churches. The only point on which it needs some restatement in order to bring it into harmony with modern thought is its teaching as to the origin of sin. Wesley accepts the story of the third chapter of Genesis as literal history, and St. Paul's interpretation of it in Romans v. as final and authoritative. Indeed, he rather goes beyond anything that is actually stated in this old story in his picture of primitive man in I. 1 as a being morally and spiritually 'perfect as his Father in heaven is perfect.' Biology and anthropology will not allow of this literal interpretation. What they indicate is that the primitive pair, or primitive race, from which humanity took its origin, had gradually developed in physical structure and psychical characteristics from the lower animals of the vertebrate type. It had reached a point when the instincts of hunger and thirst and sex and so forth were fully developed; when also admiration of colour and sound and proportion had begun to be felt; and when curiosity and the desire for knowledge stirred man to activities of various kinds. Last of all came the growth of a moral sense, and the idea of duty; and then only could the race be properly described as human. Before the coming of the moral sense man was not sinful, neither was he holy; he was simply non-moral, innocent as a dog or a horse is innocent. But the moral sense involved a conflict with the older instincts and motives; and these, through their long tenure and their consequent crystallization into habit, were necessarily stronger than the nascent new-comer; yet, though defeated, the moral sense revenged itself by inspiring in the sinner shame and remorse, and a dread of the God

who was conceived as the ultimate source of the moral instincts. All this is symbolically indicated in the story of the Fall. A command is given which has a divine sanction, disobedience to which is wrong. The temptation to disobey comes from the serpent, the most subtle of all the lower animals, which therefore stands for the lower nature in its highest development. (There is no suggestion in Genesis that the serpent was an incarnation of the devil—that is quite a later addition ; and its popular acceptance in England is due more to Milton than to the Bible.) The temptation is accordingly addressed to the older physical and psychical motives. ‘ The tree was good for food ’—there is the appeal to the animal instinct of hunger ; ‘ it was pleasant to the eyes ’—there is the appeal to the aesthetic sentiment ; ‘ it was a tree to be desired to make one wise ’—there is the appeal to intellectual curiosity. In St. Paul’s language it was a challenge to man to ‘ fulfil the desires of the flesh and the mind ’ rather than the new impulse of the spirit. The result was inevitable—the older habits and instincts prevailed ; but with the defeat of conscience came the sense of shame, manifesting itself symbolically in special relation to the most imperious of the instincts, and the dread of God and the separation from Him, which is spiritual death. The human race is involved in the sin of Adam, because it has received from him that human nature which in its very constitution makes sin inevitable. The story of the Fall is repeated, recapitulated, in the history of every individual of the race. In the infant we find only the purely animal instincts at work ; it eats and sleeps and nestles to the warmth of its mother’s embrace. Then gradually we see the beginnings of aesthetic feelings, as it stretches out its hands to a brightly-coloured toy, or stops crying to listen to the sound of music. Later still comes curiosity, and it wants to grasp in its fingers or put into its mouth every new object of vision ; and as it gains the power of speech, it pours out question on question, to the distraction of its parents and friends. Last of all, after a long interval, arises the dim consciousness that some things which are desirable are naughty, and must not be done ; and the conflict begins in which, sooner or later, every man discovers that there is a law in his members, his bodily and intellectual outfit, warring with the law of his better self, and bringing him into a slavery from which he cannot free himself. The author of the Apocalypse of Baruch hit on a profound truth when he said (liv. 19), ‘ Adam is therefore not the cause [of sin] save only of his own soul, but each one of us has been the Adam of his own soul.’ Sin is universal, because human nature is universal ; we derive it from Adam, only as we derive from him through heredity all the predispositions to disease and physical decay which are our common lot. As partakers of the Adamic or human nature, we are born in sin ; but as partakers of the deutero-Adamaic or divine nature, we may be so led by the Spirit that we

shall not fulfil the desires of the flesh, having been born again, 'not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.'

It is admitted that St. Paul in Romans v. interpreted the story of Genesis literally; but in this he followed the methods of exegesis in which he had been trained. As Tennant says (*Fall and Original Sin*, p. 250): 'His ideas of the first man, the temptation of Eve, the Fall and its results, were derived from the Jewish schools.' We are no more bound to accept the details of his interpretation here than in his treatment in Gal. iv. 21-31 of the story of Sarah and Hagar.

Wesley naturally accepted St. Paul's view; but in his *Treatise on Original Sin* he frankly says: 'That all men are liable to these [penalties] for Adam's sin alone I do not assert; but they are so, for their own outward and inward sins, which, through their own fault, spring from the infection of their nature.' And again, on the question of the justice of God in punishing all mankind for the sin of Adam, he says: 'I do not understand it. It is quite beyond my understanding. It is a depth which I cannot fathom.' Nor does his view as to the origin of sin affect the argument of this sermon in any degree. The ground of the doctrine of justification is the universality of sin. How it came to be so, how it came into the world at all, is irrelevant; it *is* here, and therefore some way of salvation from it must be found. Underlying the whole argument, though not expressed in so many words, there is the feeling that God needed, not only to justify the ungodly, but to justify Himself; and this He does by the gift of His Son.

O felix culpa, quae talem meruit salvatorem!

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*To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness.—ROM. iv. 5.*

1. How a sinner may be justified before God, the Lord and Judge of all, is a question of no common importance to every child of man. It contains the foundation of all our hope, inasmuch as while we are at enmity with God, there can be no true peace, no solid joy, either in time or in eternity. What peace can there be, while our own heart condemns us, and much more, He that is 'greater than our heart, and knoweth

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Par. 1. Wesley's interpretation of 1 John iii. 20 is the one accepted by so sound an exegete as Dr. Findlay. Westcott, on the other hand, paraphrases the passage: 'The sense

within us of a sincere love of the brethren, which is the sign of God's presence within us, will enable us to stay the accusations of our conscience, whatever they may be, be-

all things' ? What solid joy, either in this world or that to come, while ' the wrath of God abideth on us ' ?

2. And yet how little hath this important question been understood ? What confused notions have many had concerning it ! Indeed, not only confused, but often utterly false ; contrary to the truth, as light to darkness , notions absolutely inconsistent with the oracles of God, and with the whole analogy of faith. And hence, erring concerning the very foundation, they could not possibly build thereon ; at least, not ' gold, silver, or precious stones,' which would endure when tried as by fire ; but only ' hay and stubble,' neither acceptable to God, nor profitable to man.

3. In order to do justice, as far as in me lies, to the vast importance of the subject, to save those that seek the truth in sincerity from ' vain jangling and strife of words,' to clear the confusedness of thought into which so many have already been led thereby, and to give them true and just conceptions of this great mystery of godliness, I shall endeavour to show,—

- I. WHAT IS THE GENERAL GROUND OF THIS WHOLE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION ,
- II. WHAT JUSTIFICATION IS ,
- III. WHO THEY ARE THAT ARE JUSTIFIED , AND,
- IV ON WHAT TERMS THEY ARE JUSTIFIED.

I. I am first to show, what is the general ground of this whole doctrine of justification.

cause God, who gives us this love, and so blesses us with His fellowship, is greater than our heart ; and He, having perfect knowledge, forgives all on which our heart sadly dwells.' The Revisers follow this interpretation. Dr. Findlay says: ' The question is, Does the Apostle say " God is greater than our heart and knows all " by way of *warning* to the over-confident and self-excusing, to those tempted to disregard their secret misgivings ; or by way of *comfort* to the over-scrupulous

and self-tormenting, to those tempted to brood over and magnify their misgivings ? ' His own preference is for the first alternative ; ' Since his own ignorant and partial heart condemns him, let him consider what must be the verdict of the all-searching and all-holy Judge ' (*Fellowship in the Life Eternal*, p. 303). This is supported by St. Paul's statement in 1 Cor. iv. 4: ' I know nothing against myself ; yet not on this ground am I justified. But He that trieth me is the Lord.'



1. In the image of God was man made, holy as He that created him is holy; merciful as the Author of all is merciful; perfect as his Father in heaven is perfect. As God is love, so man, dwelling in love, dwelt in God, and God in him. God made him to be an 'image of His own eternity,' an incorruptible picture of the God of glory. He was accordingly pure, as God is pure, from every spot of sin. He knew not evil in any kind or degree, but was inwardly and outwardly sinless and undefiled. He 'loved the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his mind, and soul, and strength.'

2. To man, thus upright and perfect, God gave a perfect law, to which He required full and perfect obedience. He required full obedience in every point, and this to be performed without any intermission, from the moment man became a living soul, till the time of his trial should be ended. No allowance was made for any falling short. As, indeed, there was no need of any, man being altogether equal to the task assigned, and thoroughly furnished for every good word and work.

3. To the entire law of love which was written in his heart (against which, perhaps, he could not sin directly), it seemed good to the sovereign wisdom of God to superadd one positive law 'Thou shalt not eat of the fruit of the tree that groweth in the midst of the garden', annexing that penalty thereto, 'In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.'

4. Such then was the state of man in Paradise. By the

I. 1. 'An image of His own eternity' (Wisdom ii. 23). This and the following paragraphs involve an interpretation of the phrase 'God created man in His own image' which cannot be sustained. The image of God in which man was created is the ground of his dominion over the lower animals; and must be sought in that which distinguishes him from them—namely, self-conscious personality, the recognition of moral distinctions, and the capacity for fellowship with God. The three fundamental propositions of Hu-

manity are 'I am myself,' 'I ought to do right,' 'I can pray.' As soon as he became capable of making these statements, he became a Man, self-determined, moral, religious. But these faculties were at first rather capacities than achievements, and the history of man has been the record of the perpetual conflict between them and 'the tiger and the ape,' the animal instincts and motives which had so long dominated him. See, however, the introduction to this sermon.

free, unmerited love of God, he was holy and happy : he knew, loved, enjoyed God, which is, in substance, life everlasting. And in this life of love he was to continue for ever, if he continued to obey God in all things ; but if he disobeyed Him in any, he was to forfeit all. 'In that day,' said God, 'thou shalt surely die.'

5. Man did disobey God. He 'ate of the tree, of which God commanded him, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it.' And in that day he was condemned by the righteous judgement of God. Then also the sentence, whereof he was warned before, began to take place upon him. For the moment he tasted that fruit, he died. His soul died, was separated from God ; separate from whom the soul has no more life than the body has when separate from the soul. His body, likewise, became corruptible and mortal ; so that death then took hold on this also. And being already dead in spirit, dead to God, dead in sin, he hastened on to death everlasting ; to the destruction both of body and soul, in the fire never to be quenched.

6. Thus 'by one man sin entered into the world, and death

5. Wesley believed that physical death did not occur before the Fall of Man. In Sermon LVI, ii. 1, he says : 'God Almighty made no corruption, no destruction, in the inanimate creation. He made not death in the animal creation ; neither its harbingers—sin and pain.' The geological record, the successive strata, which are the graveyards of innumerable forgotten species of animals, conclusively disprove this. The only possible question is whether, if he had not sinned, man would have been physically immortal. Wesley thought so at this time ; but even the story in Genesis does not support his view ; and he changed his opinion later, as is seen in Sermon XXXIX, i. 3. If the body of man had been immortal, why should it be necessary for him to eat of the Tree of Life, in order that he might live for ever ? And if physical death

were the penalty intended in the sentence, 'In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die,' how is it that according to the story Adam lived 930 years after the Fall ? But of course from the biological point of view, it is impossible that under any circumstances the body of man should have lasted longer than from seventy to a hundred years. Death is as necessary a part of physical development as birth. The death which sin has brought is not the dissolution of soul from body, but the spiritual death which alone makes physical death terrible. 'The sting of death is sin' ; apart from sin death would have had no terror, and would have been merely the translation of the soul to a fuller and more spiritual life ; possibly enough without either pain or reluctance.

by sin. And so death passed upon all men,' as being contained in him who was the common father and representative of us all. Thus, 'through the offence of one,' all are dead, dead to God, dead in sin, dwelling in a corruptible, mortal body, shortly to be dissolved, and under the sentence of death eternal. For as 'by one man's disobedience' all 'were made sinners', so, by that offence of one 'judgement came upon all men to condemnation' (Rom. v. 12, &c.).

7. In this state we were, even all mankind, when 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, to the end we might not perish, but have everlasting life.' In the fullness of time He was made man, another common Head of mankind, a second general Parent and Representative of the whole human race. And as such it was that 'He bore our griefs,' 'the Lord laying upon Him the iniquities of us all.' Then was He 'wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities.' 'He made His soul an offering for sin': He poured out His blood for the transgressors, He 'bare our sins in His own body on the tree,' that by His stripes we might be healed and by that one oblation of Himself, once offered, He hath redeemed me and all mankind, having thereby 'made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.'

8. In consideration of this, that the Son of God hath 'tasted death for every man,' God hath now 'reconciled the world to Himself, not imputing to them their' former 'trespasses.' And thus, 'as by the offence of one judgement came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification.' So that, for the sake of His well-beloved Son, of what He hath done and suffered for us, God now vouchsafes, on one only condition (which Himself also enables us to perform), both to remit the punishment due to our sins, to reinstate us in His favour, and to restore our dead souls to spiritual life, as the earnest of life eternal.

9. This, therefore, is the general ground of the whole doctrine

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7. 'His one oblation.' See Prayer of Consecration in the Order for Holy Communion.

of justification. By the sin of the first Adam, who was not only the father, but likewise the representative, of us all, we all fell short of the favour of God, we all became children of wrath, or, as the Apostle expresses it, 'judgement came upon all men to condemnation.' Even so, by the sacrifice for sin made by the second Adam, as the representative of us all, God is so far reconciled to all the world, that He hath given them a new covenant; the plain condition whereof being once fulfilled, 'there is no more condemnation' for us, but 'we are justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.'

II. 1. But what is it to be *justified*? What is *justification*? This was the second thing which I proposed to show. And it is evident, from what has been already observed, that it is not the being made actually just and righteous. This is *sanctification*; which is, indeed, in some degree, the immediate fruit of justification, but, nevertheless, is a distinct gift of God, and of a totally different nature. The one implies, what God does for us through His Son, the other, what He works in us by His Spirit. So that, although some rare instances may be found, wherein the term *justified* or *justification* is used in so wide a sense as to include *sanctification* also; yet, in general use, they are sufficiently distinguished from each other, both by St. Paul and the other inspired writers.

2. Neither is that far-fetched conceit, that justification is the clearing us from accusation, particularly that of Satan, easily proveable from any clear text of holy writ. In the whole scriptural account of this matter, as above laid down, neither that accuser nor his accusation appears to be at all taken in. It cannot indeed be denied, that he is the 'accuser' of men, emphatically so called. But it does in no wise appear, that the great Apostle hath any reference to this, more or less, in all that

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II. 2. Apparently Wesley has in his mind the theory of Origen that the human soul of our Lord was given to the devil as a ransom for the souls of men; but he could not retain it, and so was outwitted in

his supposed bargain. Augustine (*De Lib. Arb.* iii. 10) follows on similar lines: 'God the Son subjugated even the devil to man, extorting nothing from him by violence, but overcoming him by the law of justice.'

he hath written touching justification, either to the Romans or the Galatians.

3. It is also far easier to take for granted, than to prove from any clear scripture testimony, that justification is the clearing us from the accusation brought against us by the law : at least, if this forced, unnatural way of speaking mean either more or less than this, that whereas we have transgressed the law of God, and thereby deserved the damnation of hell, God does not inflict on those who are justified the punishment which they had deserved.

4. Least of all does justification imply, that God is deceived in those whom He justifies ; that He thinks them to be what, in fact, they are not , that He accounts them to be otherwise than they are. It does by no means imply, that God judges concerning us contrary to the real nature of things , that He esteems us better than we really are, or believes us righteous when we are unrighteous. Surely no. The judgement of the all-wise God is always according to truth. Neither can it ever consist with His unerring wisdom, to think that I am innocent, to judge that I am righteous or holy, because another is so. He can no more, in this manner, confound me with Christ, than with David or Abraham. Let any man, to whom God hath given understanding, weigh this without prejudice ; and he cannot but perceive, that such a notion of justification is neither reconcileable to reason nor Scripture.

5. The plain scriptural notion of justification is pardon, the forgiveness of sins. It is that act of God the Father, whereby, for the sake of the propitiation made by the blood of His Son, He 'showeth forth His righteousness' (or mercy) 'by the re-

3. Wesley fails to recognize fully the immanent necessity in the Divine Nature of an atonement for sin. Whether we regard God as the Governor of the universe, or as the Father of His family, His law must be vindicated. Perhaps the idea that the law brings an accusation against us errs in personifying the law, and so may be described as 'forced and unnatural' ; but the

eternal necessity for the Atonement because of the violation of the law still remains, and cannot be so easily brushed out of the way. In Sermon XLIX, ii. 6, this is clearly enough stated : 'It pleased (God) to prepare for us Christ's body and blood, whereby our ransom might be paid, and His justice satisfied.'

5. 'Righteousness' (or 'mercy'). So also in iv. 1 Wesley adds 'or

mission of the sins that are past.' This is the easy, natural account of it given by St. Paul, throughout this whole epistle. So he explains it himself, more particularly in this, and in the following chapter. Thus, in the next verses but one to the text, 'Blessed are they,' saith he, 'whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered : blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.' To him that is justified or forgiven, God 'will not impute sin' to his condemnation. He will not condemn him on that account, either in this world or in that which is to come. His sins, all his past sins, in thought, word and deed, are covered, are blotted out, shall not be remembered or mentioned against him, any more than if they had not been. God will not inflict on that sinner what he deserved to suffer, because the Son of His love hath suffered for him. And from the time we are 'accepted through the Beloved,' 'reconciled to God through His blood,' He loves, and blesses, and watches over us for good, even as if we had never sinned.

Indeed the Apostle in one place seems to extend the meaning of the word much farther, where he says, 'Not the hearers of the law, but the doers of the law, shall be justified.' Here he appears to refer our justification to the sentence of the great day. And so our Lord Himself unquestionably doth, when He says, 'By thy words thou shalt be justified'; proving thereby that 'for every idle word men shall speak, they shall

mercy' to the text of St. Paul; which confirms the statement made above on par. 3, that he failed, at any rate at this time, to recognize fully the necessity of the Atonement from the legal point of view. In the *Notes*, Rom. iii. 25, he makes the same addition, 'His justice and mercy.' The addition weakens the Apostle's argument; the aim of which is to show that the death of Christ met the whole claim of divine justice, so that God could be just, and the justifier of the believing sinner; or as St. John puts it, be 'faithful and just to forgive us our sins.' Mercy provided the Atonement;

but, the Atonement now made, it is Justice that forgives. So Charles Wesley in Hymn 42 (*Hymns and Sacred Poems*, 1749) sings:

My pardon I *claim*,  
For a sinner I am,  
A sinner believing in Jesus's name.

'Not the hearers of the law.' This is no real exception to the uniform usage of St. Paul; for he is speaking of the heathen who 'do by nature the things of the law.' Nor are the few occurrences of the word 'justify' in the Gospels relevant to the technical meaning of the word in St. Paul's Epistles,

give an account in the day of judgement'; but perhaps we can hardly produce another instance of St. Paul's using the word in that distant sense. In the general tenor of his writings, it is evident he doth not; and least of all in the text before us, which undeniably speaks, not of those who have already 'finished their course,' but of those who are now just *setting out*, just beginning to 'run the race which is set before them.'

III. 1. But this is the third thing which was to be considered, namely, Who are they that are justified? And the Apostle tells us expressly, the ungodly: 'He' (that is, God) 'justifieth the ungodly', the ungodly of every kind and degree; and none but the ungodly. As 'they that are righteous need no repentance,' so they need no forgiveness. It is only sinners that have any occasion for pardon: it is sin alone which admits of being forgiven. Forgiveness, therefore, has an immediate reference to sin, and, in this respect, to nothing else. It is our *unrighteousness* to which the pardoning God is *merciful* it is our *iniquity* which He 'remembereth no more.'

2. This seems not to be at all considered by those who so vehemently contend that a man must be sanctified, that is, holy, before he can be justified; especially by such of them as affirm, that universal holiness or obedience must precede justification. (Unless they mean that justification at the last day, which is wholly out of the present question.) So far from it, that the very supposition is not only flatly impossible (~~for where there is no love of God, there is no holiness, and there is no love of God but from a sense of His loving us~~), but also grossly, intrinsically absurd, contradictory to itself. For it is not a saint but a sinner that is forgiven, and under the notion of a sinner. God justifieth not the godly, but the ungodly; not those that are holy already, but the unholy. Upon what condition He doeth this, will be considered quickly: but whatever it is, it cannot be holiness. To assert this, is to say the Lamb of God takes away only those sins which were taken away before.

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III. 2 'Under the notion of a sinner,' i.e. considered as a sinner.

3. Does then the Good Shepherd seek and save only those that are found already? No. He seeks and saves that which is lost. He pardons those who need His pardoning mercy. He saves from the guilt of sin (and, at the same time, from the power) sinners of every kind, of every degree; men who, till then, were altogether ungodly; in whom the love of the Father was not, and, consequently, in whom dwelt no good thing, no good or truly Christian temper, but all such as were evil and abominable—pride, anger, love of the world, the genuine fruits of that *carnal mind* which is ‘enmity against God.’

4. These who are sick, the burden of whose sins is intolerable, are they that need a Physician; these who are guilty, who groan under the wrath of God, are they that need a pardon. These who are *condemned already*, not only by God, but also by their own conscience, as by a thousand witnesses, of all their ungodliness, both in thought, and word, and work, cry aloud for him that ‘justifieth the ungodly,’ through the redemption that is in Jesus,—the ungodly, and ‘him that worketh not’, that worketh not, before he is justified, anything that is good, that is truly virtuous or holy, but only evil continually. For his heart is necessarily, essentially evil, till the love of God is shed abroad therein. And while the tree is corrupt, so are the fruits, ‘for an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit.’

5. If it be objected, ‘Nay, but a man, before he is justified, may feed the hungry, or clothe the naked; and these are good works,’—the answer is easy: He may do these, even before he is justified, and these are, in one sense, ‘good works’—they are ‘good and profitable to men.’ But it does not follow, that they are, strictly speaking, good in themselves, or good in the sight of God. All truly *good works* (to use the words of our Church) *follow after justification*; and they are therefore good and ‘acceptable to God in Christ,’ because they ‘spring out of a true and living faith.’ By a parity of reason, all *works done before justification are not good*, in the Christian sense, *forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ* (though [often] from some kind of faith in God they may spring), ‘yea rather,

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5. See Articles xii. and xiii. But see note on Sermon I, par. 2.



for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not ' (how strange soever it may appear to some) ' but they have the nature of sin.'

6. Perhaps those who doubt of this have not duly considered the weighty reason which is here assigned, why no works done before justification can be truly and properly good. The argument plainly runs thus :—

No works are good, which are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done

But no works done before justification are done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done

Therefore, no works done before justification are good.

The first proposition is self-evident, and the second—that no works done before justification are done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done—will appear equally plain and undeniable, if we only consider, God hath willed and commanded, that *all our works should be done in charity* (ἐν ἀγάπῃ), in love, in that love to God which produces love to all mankind. But none of our works can be done in this love while the love of the Father (of God as our Father) is not in us and this love cannot be in us till we receive the ' Spirit of adoption, crying in our hearts, Abba, Father.' If, therefore, God doth not *justify the ungodly*, and him that (in this sense) *worketh not*, then hath Christ died in vain, then, notwithstanding His death, can no flesh living be justified.

IV. 1. But on what terms, then, is he justified, who altogether *ungodly*, and till that time *worketh not*? On ~~of~~ alone, which is faith—he ' believeth in Him that justified the ungodly.' And ' he that believeth is not condemned ' yea, he is ' passed from death unto life.' ' For the righteous

6. This argument is not convincing. St. Paul (1 Cor. xvi. 14) says to the factious Christians of Corinth, ' Let all that you do be done in love ' ; but it is an unwarrantable forcing of his meaning to say that love stands for ' that love to God which produces love to all mankind.'

And it is impossible to maintain that no man before his conversion does anything in love. Can it be said without a manifest paradox that ~~the~~ man described in Sermon II, i. does not act in love?

IV. 1. ' Righteousness (or mercy) See note on ii. 5 above.

ness' (or mercy) 'of God is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: whom God hath set forth for a propitiation, through faith in His blood; that He might be just, and' (consistently with His justice) 'the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus': 'therefore, we conclude, that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law'; without previous obedience to the moral law, which, indeed, he could not, till now, perform. That it is the moral law, and that alone, which is here intended, appears evidently from the words that follow: 'Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! Yea, we establish the law.' What law do we establish by faith? Not the ritual law not the ceremonial law of Moses. In no wise, but the great, unchangeable law of love, the holy love of God and of our neighbour.

2. Faith in general is a divine, supernatural ἔλεγχος, *evidence* or *conviction*, 'of things not seen,' not discoverable by our bodily senses, as being either past, future, or spiritual. Justifying faith implies, not only a divine evidence or conviction that 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself,' but a sure trust and confidence that Christ died for *my* sins, that He loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*. And at what time soever a sinner thus believes, be it in early childhood, in the strength of his years, or when he is old and hoary-haired, God justifieth that ungodly one God, for the sake of His Son, pardoneth and absolveth him who had in him, till then, no good thing. Repentance, indeed, God had given him before; but that repentance was neither more nor less than a deep sense of the want of all good, and the presence of all evil. And whatever good he hath, or doeth, from that hour, when he first believes in God through Christ, faith does not *find*, but *bring*. This is the fruit of faith. First the tree is good, and then the fruit is good also.

3. I cannot describe the nature of this faith better than in the words of our own Church: 'The only instrument of salvation' (whereof justification is one branch) 'is faith, that is, a sure trust and confidence that God both hath and will forgive our sins, that He hath accepted us again into His

favour, for the merits of Christ's death and passion. But here we must take heed that we do not halt with God through an inconstant, wavering faith. Peter, coming to Christ upon the water, because he fainted in faith, was in danger of drowning, so we, if we begin to waver or doubt, it is to be feared that we shall sink as Peter did, not into the water, but into the bottomless pit of hell-fire.'

'Therefore, have a sure and constant faith, not only that the death of Christ is available for all the world, but that He hath made a full and sufficient sacrifice for *thee*, a perfect cleansing of *thy* sins, so that thou mayest say, with the Apostle, He loved *thee*, and gave Himself for *thee*. For this is to make Christ *thine own*, and to apply His merits unto *thyself*.'

4. By affirming that this faith is the term or *condition of justification*, I mean, first, that there is no justification without it. 'He that believeth not is condemned already'; and so long as he believeth not, that condemnation cannot be removed, but 'the wrath of God abideth on him.' As 'there is no other name given under heaven' than that of Jesus of Nazareth, no other merit whereby a condemned sinner can ever be saved from the guilt of sin, so there is no other way of obtaining a share in His merit, than *by faith in His name*. So that as long as we are without this faith, we are 'strangers to the covenant of promise,' we are 'aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and without God in the world.' Whatsoever virtues (so called) a man may have—I speak of those unto whom the gospel is preached, for 'what have I to do to judge them that are without?'—whatsoever good works (so accounted) he may do, it profiteth not; he is still a *child of wrath*, still under the curse, till he believes in Jesus.

5. Faith, therefore, is the *necessary* condition of justification, yea, and the *only necessary* condition thereof. This is the

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3. The first quotation is from the penultimate paragraph of the Second Homily on the Passion. Wesley condenses it, but nothing of vital importance is omitted. The second is from the penultimate paragraph

of the First Part of the Homily on the Sacrament, also somewhat abbreviated.

4. Note the important qualification of the statement that there can be no good works *before* conversion.

second point carefully to be observed, that, the very moment God giveth faith (for *it is the gift of God*) to the 'ungodly' that 'worketh not,' that 'faith is counted to him for righteousness.' He hath no righteousness at all, antecedent to this, not so much as negative righteousness, or innocence. But 'faith is imputed to him for righteousness' the very moment that he believeth. Not that God (as was observed before) thinketh him to be what he is not. But as 'He made Christ to be sin for us,' that is, treated Him as a sinner, punishing Him for our sins, so He counteth us righteous, from the time we believe in Him: that is, He doth not punish us for our sins, yea, treats us as though we were guiltless and righteous.

6. Surely the difficulty of assenting to this proposition, that 'faith is the *only condition* of justification,' must arise from not understanding it. We mean thereby thus much, that it is the only thing without which no one is justified; the only thing that is immediately, indispensably, absolutely requisite in order to pardon. As, on the one hand, though a man should have everything else without faith, yet he cannot be justified, so, on the other, though he be supposed to want everything else, yet if he hath faith, he cannot but be justified. For suppose a sinner of any kind or degree, in a full sense of his total ungodliness, of his utter inability to think, speak, or do good, and his absolute meetness for hell-fire; suppose, I say, this sinner, helpless and hopeless, casts himself wholly on the mercy of God in Christ (which indeed he cannot do but by the grace of God), who can doubt but he is forgiven in that moment? Who will affirm that any more is *indispensably required*, before that sinner can be justified?

Now, if there ever was one such instance from the beginning of the world (and have there not been, and are there not, ten thousand times ten thousand?), it plainly follows, that faith is, in the above sense, the sole condition of justification.

7. It does not become poor, guilty, sinful worms, who receive whatsoever blessings they enjoy (from the least drop of water that cools our tongue, to the immense riches of glory

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5. 'It is the gift of God.' See note on Sermon I, iii. 3.

in eternity), of grace, of mere favour, and not of debt, to of God the reasons of His conduct. It is not meet for us call Him in question, 'who giveth account to none of His ways', to demand, Why didst Thou make faith the condition the only condition, of justification? Wherefore didst Thou decree, *He that believeth*, and he only, *shall be saved*? This is the very point on which St. Paul so strongly insists in the ninth chapter of this Epistle, viz. that the terms of pardon and acceptance must depend, not on us, but on *Him that calleth us* that there is no *unrighteousness with God*, in fixing His own terms, not according to ours, but His own good pleasure who may justly say, 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy,' namely, on him who believeth in Jesus. 'So that it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth,' choose the condition on which he shall find acceptance, 'but of God that showeth mercy', that accepteth none at all but of His own free love, His unmerited goodness. 'Therefore

7. Wesley accepts the interpretation given by Arminius of Rom. ix. 6-29. But to an impartial reader, it must be clear that this is not what St. Paul meant. He is asserting the absolute sovereignty of God, as Calvin saw, and not proving that faith is the condition of justification. There are three possible explanations.

(1) Fritsche thinks that Paul was carried away by his argument, and so was led to contradict the whole tenor of his teaching in the former part of the Epistle.

(2) Meyer (with whom I agree) holds that the absolute sovereignty of God and the moral freedom of man are two truths, or rather two aspects of the truth, which are both incontestably proved, yet cannot be reconciled in our finite thought. In all truths which have to do with the Infinite, we find this irreconcilable antithesis, as Sir W. Hamilton shows. Is Space infinite or limited? If

infinite, then there is no possibility of fixing a locus for anything; limited, we cannot avoid thinking of space beyond the limit. Was there ever a beginning to Time? If not, we could never have reached the present moment; if there was, there must have been a moment before that beginning. So with the Trinity and Unity of the Godhead: the human and divine natures in one Christ: God is Three, God is One; Christ is God, Christ is man. Each proposition is true, yet we cannot not by any effort of our intellect conceive them as both true together, and more than we can see at one glance the two sides of a coin, or the two surfaces of a sphere. We accept the statement as one aspect of the four-sided truth, but our finite mind cannot grasp the two aspects in one. So is it with the sovereignty of God and the freewill of man. They are the two sides of the one truth.

(3) Beyschlag and many others

hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy,' viz. on those who believe on the Son of His love, 'and whom He will,' that is, those who believe not, 'He hardeneth,' leaves at last to the hardness of their hearts.

8. One reason, however, we may humbly conceive, of God's fixing this condition of justification, 'If thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ, thou shalt be saved,' was to *hide pride from man*. Pride had already destroyed the very angels of God, had cast down 'a third part of the stars of heaven.' It was likewise in great measure owing to this, when the tempter said, 'Ye shall be as gods,' that Adam fell from his own steadfastness, and brought sin and death into the world. It was therefore an instance of wisdom worthy of God, to appoint such a condition of reconciliation for him and all his posterity, as might effectually humble, might abase them to the dust. And such is faith. It is peculiarly fitted for this end: for he that cometh unto God by this faith, must fix his eye singly on his own wickedness, on his guilt and helplessness, without having the least regard to any supposed good in himself, to any virtue or righteousness whatsoever. He must come as a *mere sinner*, inwardly and outwardly, self-destroyed and self-condemned, bringing nothing to God but ungodliness only, pleading nothing of his own but sin and misery. Thus it is, and thus alone, when his *mouth is stopped*, and he stands utterly *guilty before God*, that he can *look unto Jesus*, as the whole and sole *propitiation for his sins*. Thus only can he

think that St. Paul is dealing, not with individual but with national destiny, as realized in this world. His subject is the position in history of the Jewish nation, not the future doom of individuals. For a full discussion of this difficult question, see Sanday and Headlam on Romans.

8. The story of the Fall of the Angels rests upon a rather precarious foundation. The only definite mention of it in Scripture is in the sixth verse of Jude, copied in 2 Pet. ii. 4. Jude took it from the Book of

Enoch, and ultimately it rested on a rabbinical interpretation of Gen. vi. 1-4. It was not, however, through pride, but through lust, that these 'sons of God' fell. It is Milton who has made the idea of the ambition of Satan, and his consequent rebellion and defeat, familiar to English readers. The fall of the 'third part of the stars' (Rev. viii. 12) has nothing to do with the matter.

Wesley might have found a much better reason for God's fixing faith as the condition of salvation than this. The essence of faith is that

be *found in Him*, and receive the 'righteousness which is of God by faith.'

9. Thou ungodly one, who hearest or readest these words ! thou vile, helpless, miserable sinner ! I charge thee before God the Judge of all, go straight unto Him, with all thy ungodliness. Take heed thou destroy not thy own soul by pleading thy righteousness, more or less. Go as altogether ungodly, guilty, lost, destroyed, deserving and dropping into hell, and thou shalt then find favour in His sight, and know that He justifieth the ungodly. As such thou shalt be brought unto the *blood of sprinkling*, as an undone, helpless, damned sinner. Thus *look unto Jesus* ! There is *the Lamb of God*, who *taketh away thy sins* ! Plead thou no works, no righteousness of thine own ! no humility, contrition, sincerity ! In no wise. That were, in very deed, to deny the Lord that bought thee. No plead thou singly the blood of the covenant, the ransom paid for thy proud, stubborn, sinful soul. Who art thou, that now seest and feelest both thine inward and outward ungodliness ? Thou art the man ! I want thee for my Lord ! I challenge *thee* for a child of God by faith ! The Lord hath need of thee. Thou who feelest thou art just fit for hell, art just fit to advance His glory ; the glory of His free grace, justifying the ungodly and him that worketh not. O come quickly ! Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou, even thou, art reconciled to God.

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<p>it unites the soul to Christ. He is          formed in our hearts by faith ; and          it is this vital union with Him that</p>	<p>delivers us from sin ; so that we          can say, ' I no longer live, but <u>Christ</u>          liveth in me.'</p>
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## SERMON VI

### THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH

IN *Journal*, June 12, 1742, Wesley says, 'I preached on the righteousness of the law and the righteousness of faith.' [This was at Epworth.] 'While I was speaking, several dropped down as dead, and among the rest such a cry was heard of sinners groaning for the righteousness of faith as almost drowned my voice. But many of these soon lift up their heads with joy, and broke out into thanksgiving, being assured they now had the desire of their souls—the forgiveness of their sins.' On June 17 he preached on the same subject at Sheffield, and 'had not half finished my discourse when I was constrained to break off in the midst, our hearts were so filled with a sense of the love of God, and our mouths with prayer and thanksgiving. When we were somewhat satisfied herewith, I went on to call sinners to the salvation ready to be revealed.'

It seems a pity that a sermon so clear, convincing, and effective should have been based on a misinterpretation of the text. But so it is. To begin with, Wesley affirms that the first verse refers to an alleged covenant of works made with Adam while in Paradise, and not to the covenant given by Moses. The passage occurs in Lev. xviii. 5, and runs, 'Ye shall therefore keep My statutes, and My judgements; which, if a man do, he shall live in them.' The phrase 'My statutes and judgements' is used several times in Leviticus, and refers always to the laws which are there laid down. The Covenant of Works is a theological fiction, which made its first appearance about the beginning of the seventeenth century. It is not found in any of the creeds or symbols, except the Westminster Confession (1648), in which chap. vii. sec. 2 runs: 'The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.' Wesley admits that both passages 'were spoken by Moses himself to the people of Israel, and that concerning the covenant which then was.' Yet all through the sermon he takes the first passage as referring to the covenant of works. He rightly says that the second passage also had its original reference to the law of Moses; but he fails to notice, at any rate explicitly, that St. Paul does not quote



the exact words of Moses (Deut. xxx. 11-14), but modifies them to suit his purpose, and puts them into the mouth of 'the righteousness which is of faith' personified. What Moses said was that the law was not too hard for the people to observe; it had not to be fetched from heaven, or from over the sea; on the contrary, it was actually in their mouth and heart. St. Paul adapts this saying, which ~~had~~ already become proverbial (see 4 Esdras iv. 8, Baruch iii. 29, Jubilees xxiv. 32), and makes the Righteousness of Faith say, 'It is not necessary to bring Christ down from above; He has already become incarnate amongst men: nor to bring Him back from the dead; He has already been raised from the grave; there are no impossibilities required of thee; the word of salvation is in thy mouth and heart. Thou hast but to believe on Christ in thy heart, and confess Him with thy mouth, and thou art saved.' St. Paul's argument is that the gospel, like the law, is clearly revealed to men by the preaching of himself and his fellow apostles; but, unlike the law, it demands not a perfect and unbroken obedience to precepts, but a faith which makes righteousness possible. Thus Wesley's premisses are all wrong, but his conclusions are all right; which happened sometimes even to St. Paul himself, as in 1 Cor. ix. 9.

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*Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.*

*But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven (that is, to bring Christ down from above) ?*

*Or, Who shall descend into the deep (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead) ?*

*But what saith it ? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart : that is, the word of faith, which we preach.—ROM. xi. 5-8.*

1. THE Apostle does not here oppose the covenant given by Moses, to the covenant given by Christ. If we ever imagined this, it was for want of observing, that the latter as well as the former part of these words were spoken by Moses himself to the people of Israel, and that concerning the covenant which then was (Deut. xxx. 11, 12, 14). But it is the covenant of grace, which God, through Christ, hath established with men in all ages (as well before and under the Jewish dispensation, as since God was manifest in the flesh), which St. Paul here opposes to the covenant of works, made with Adam while in paradise, but commonly supposed to be the only covenant

which God had made with man, particularly by those Jews of whom the Apostle writes.

2. Of these it was that he so affectionately speaks in the beginning of this chapter 'My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they may be saved. For I bear them record, that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness (of the justification that flows from His mere grace and mercy, freely forgiving our sins through the Son of His love, through the redemption which is in Jesus) 'and seeking to establish their own righteousness' (their own holiness, antecedent to faith in 'Him that justifieth the ungodly,' as the ground of their pardon and acceptance), 'have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God,' and consequently, seek death in the error of their life.

3. They were ignorant that 'Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth,'—that, by the oblation of Himself once offered, He had put an end to the first law or covenant (which, indeed, was not given by God to Moses, but to Adam in his state of innocence), the strict tenor whereof, without any abatement, was, 'Do this, and live', and, at the same time, purchased for us that better covenant, 'Believe, and live', believe, and thou shalt be saved; now saved, both from the guilt and power of sin, and, of consequence, from the wages of it.

4. And how many are equally ignorant now, even among those who are called by the name of Christ! How many who have now 'a zeal for God,' yet have it not 'according to knowledge'; but are still seeking 'to establish their own righteousness' as the ground of their pardon and acceptance; and therefore vehemently refuse to 'submit themselves unto the righteousness of God'! Surely my heart's desire, and prayer to God for you, brethren, is, that ye may be saved. And, in order to remove this grand stumbling-block out of your way, I will endeavour to show, first, what the righteousness is which is of

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Par. 2. 'Seek death in the error of their life.' Wisdom i. 12, 'Seek not death in the error of your life.'

3. 'The oblation,' &c. From the Consecration Prayer in the Office for Holy Communion.

the law, and what 'the righteousness which is of faith'; secondly, the folly of trusting in the righteousness of the law, and the wisdom of submitting to that which is of faith.

I. 1. And, first, 'the righteousness which is of the law saith, The man which doeth these things shall live by them.' Constantly and perfectly observe all these things to do them, and then thou shalt live for ever. This law, or covenant (usually called the covenant of works), given by God to man in paradise, required an obedience perfect in all its parts, entire and wanting nothing, as the condition of his eternal continuance in the holiness and happiness wherein he was created.

2. It required that man should fulfil all righteousness, inward and outward, negative and positive : that he should not only abstain from every idle word, and avoid every evil work, but should keep every affection, every desire, every thought, in obedience to the will of God, that he should continue holy as He which had created him was holy, both in heart, and in all manner of conversation, that he should be pure in heart, even as God is pure, perfect as his Father in heaven was perfect that he should love the Lord his God with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind, and with all his strength, that he should love every soul which God had made, even as God had loved him that by this universal benevolence, he should dwell in God (who is love), and God in him that he should serve the Lord his God with all his strength, and in all things singly aim at His glory.

3. These were the things which the righteousness of the law required, that he who did them might live thereby. But it farther required, that this entire obedience to God, this inward and outward holiness, this conformity both of heart and life to His will, should be perfect in *degree*. No abatement, no allowance could possibly be made, for falling short in any degree, as to any jot or tittle, either of the outward or the inward law. If every commandment relating to outward things was obeyed, yet that was not sufficient, unless every one was obeyed with all the strength, in the highest measure, and most perfect manner. Nor did it answer the demand of this

covenant to love God with every power and faculty, unless He were loved with the full capacity of each, with the whole possibility of the soul.

4. One thing more was indispensably required by the righteousness of the law, namely, that this universal obedience, this perfect holiness both of heart and life, should be perfectly uninterrupted also, should continue without any intermission, from the moment wherein God created man, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, until the days of his trial should be ended, and he should be confirmed in life everlasting.

5. The righteousness, then, which is of the law, speaketh on this wise : ' Thou, O man of God, stand fast in love, in the image of God wherein thou art made. If thou wilt remain in life, keep the commandments, which are now written in thy heart. Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. Love, as thyself, every soul that He hath made. Desire nothing but God. Aim at God in every thought, in every word and work. Swerve not in one motion of body or soul, from Him, thy mark, and the prize of thy high calling ; and let all that is in thee praise His holy name, every power and faculty of thy soul, in every kind, in every degree, and at every moment of thine existence. " This do, and thou shalt live " : thy light shall shine, thy love shall flame, more and more, till thou art received up into the house of God in the heavens, to reign with Him for ever and ever.'

6. ' But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise : Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven ? that is, to bring down Christ from above ' (as though it were some impossible task which God required thee previously to perform, in order to thine acceptance) ; ' or, Who shall descend into the deep ? that is, to bring up Christ from the dead ' (as though that were still remaining to be done, for the sake of which thou wert to be accepted), ' but what saith it ? The word,' according to the tenor of which thou mayest now be accepted as an heir of life eternal, ' is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart : that is, the word of faith, which we preach '—the new covenant which God hath now established with sinful man through Christ Jesus.

7. By 'the righteousness which is of faith' is meant, that condition of justification (and, in consequence, of present and final salvation, if we endure therein unto the end) which was given by God to *fallen man*, through the merits and mediation of His only-begotten Son. This was in part revealed to Adam, soon after his fall, being contained in the original promise, made to him, and his seed, concerning the Seed of the woman, who should 'bruise the serpent's head' (Gen. iii. 15). It was a little more clearly revealed to Abraham, by the Angel of God from heaven, saying, 'By Myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, that in thy Seed shall all the nations of the world be blessed' (Gen. xxii. 16, 18). It was yet more fully made known to Moses, to David, and to the prophets that followed; and, through them, to many of the people of God in their respective generations. But still the bulk even of these were ignorant of it, and very few understood it clearly. Still 'life and immortality' were not so 'brought to light' to the Jews of old, as they are now unto us 'by the gospel.'

8. Now this covenant saith not to sinful man, 'Perform unsinning obedience, and live.' If this were the term, he would have no more benefit by all which Christ hath done and suffered for him, than if he was required, in order to life, to 'ascend into heaven, and bring down Christ from above';

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I. 7. The belief that Gen. iii. 15 was a prophecy of the victory of Christ over the devil, which has given it the name of the *Protevangelium*, is not found in the New Testament. It can be traced back to Irenaeus (*Advers. Heres.* iv. 40, v. 21), but was popularized by Luther, and was commonly entertained after the sixteenth century. In the first instance it can hardly be doubted that nothing more was intended than to account for the enmity between man and the serpent-race. The descendants of the woman are to make for, or attack, the head of the serpent, whilst it makes for, or attacks, their heels. There is constant warfare,

but no victory is promised to either side. The serpent kills the man just as surely by biting his heel as the man kills the serpent by crushing its head. But the serpent being in the story the agent of temptation, as the most subtle of the lower animals, the passage points to the never-ending fight between the higher and the lower natures in man, between the law of the mind and the law in the members. Any Messianic reference has to be brought to the text; it is not there. This view only adds force to Wesley's argument that the gospel was not known in any degree of fullness to the Jews of old.

or to 'descend into the deep,' into the invisible world, and 'bring up Christ from the dead.' It doth not require any impossibility to be done (although, to mere man, what it requires would be impossible ; but not to man assisted by the Spirit of God) : this were only to mock human weakness. Indeed, strictly speaking, the covenant of *grace* doth not require us to *do* anything at all, as absolutely and indispensably necessary in order to our justification , but only to *believe* in Him who, for the sake of His Son, and the propitiation which He hath made, 'justifieth the ungodly that worketh not,' and imputes his faith to him for righteousness. Even so Abraham 'believed in the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness' (Gen. xv. 6). 'And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith that he might be the father of all them that believe that righteousness might be imputed unto them also' (Rom. iv. 11). 'Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it,' i.e. faith, 'was imputed to him , but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed,' to whom faith shall be imputed for righteousness, shall stand in the stead of perfect obedience, in order to our acceptance with God, 'if we believe on Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead , who was delivered' to death 'for our offences, and was raised again for our justification' (Rom. iv. 23-25) : for the assurance of the remission of our sins, and of a second life to come, to them that believe.

9. What saith then the covenant of forgiveness, of unmerited love, of pardoning mercy ? 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' In the day thou believest, thou shalt surely live. Thou shalt be restored to the favour of God , and in His pleasure is life. Thou shalt be saved from the curse, and from the wrath, of God. Thou shalt be quickened from the death of sin into the life of righteousness. And if thou endure to the end, believing in Jesus, thou shalt never taste

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8. This view of faith overlooks the fact that it is essentially an act of the will, not merely an attitude of the intellect, or a state of the emotions. 'This is the *work* of God,

that ye should believe on Him whom He hath sent.' On the question of imputation, see Sermon XLIX and the notes thereon.

the second death ; but, having suffered with thy Lord, shalt also live and reign with Him for ever and ever.

10. Now ' this word is nigh thee.' This condition of life is plain, easy, always at hand. ' It is in thy mouth, and in thy heart,' through the operation of the Spirit of God. The moment ' thou believest in thine heart ' in Him whom God ' hath raised from the dead,' and ' confessest with thy mouth the Lord Jesus,' as *thy* Lord and *thy* God, ' thou shalt be saved ' from condemnation, from the guilt and punishment of thy former sins, and shalt have power to serve God in true holiness all the remaining days of thy life.

11. What is the difference then between the ' righteousness which is of the law,' and the ' righteousness which is of faith ' ? between the first covenant, or the covenant of works, and the second, the covenant of grace ? The essential, unchangeable difference is this : the one supposes him to whom it is given, to be already holy and happy, created in the image and enjoying the favour of God , and prescribes the condition whereon he may continue therein, in love and joy, life and immortality : the other supposes him to whom it is given, to be now unholy and unhappy, fallen short of the glorious image of God, having the wrath of God abiding on him, and hastening, through sin, whereby his soul is dead, to bodily death, and death everlasting ; and to man in this state it prescribes the condition whereon he may regain the pearl he has lost, may recover the favour and image of God, may retrieve the life of God in his soul, and be restored to the knowledge and the love of God, which is the beginning of life eternal.

12. Again : the covenant of works, in order to man's *continuance* in the favour of God, in His knowledge and love, in holiness and happiness, required of perfect man a *perfect* and uninterrupted *obedience* to every point of the law of God. Whereas, the covenant of grace, in order to man's *recovery* of the favour and the life of God, requires only *faith* , living faith in Him who, through God, justifies him that obeyed not.

13. Yet, again : the covenant of works required of Adam, and all his children, to pay the price themselves, in consideration of which they were to receive all the future blessings of God.

But in the covenant of grace, seeing we have nothing to pay, God 'frankly forgives us all': provided only, that we believe in Him who hath paid the price for us, who hath given Himself a 'propitiation for our sins, for the sins of the whole world.'

14. Thus the first covenant required what is now *afar off* from all the children of men; namely, unsinning obedience, which is far from those who are 'conceived and born in sin.' Whereas, the second requires what is nigh at hand, as though it should say, 'Thou art sin! God is love! Thou by sin art fallen short of the glory of God; yet there is mercy with Him. Bring then all thy sins to the pardoning God, and they shall vanish away as a cloud. If thou wert not ungodly, there would be no room for Him to justify thee as ungodly. But now draw near, in full assurance of faith. He speaketh, and it is done. Fear not, only believe; for even the just God justifieth all that believe in Jesus.'

II. 1. These things considered, it will be easy to show, as I proposed to do in the second place, the folly of trusting in the 'righteousness which is of the law,' and the wisdom of submitting to the 'righteousness which is of faith.'

The folly of those who still trust in the 'righteousness which is of the law,' the terms of which are, 'Do this, and live,' may abundantly appear from hence they set out wrong; their very first step is a fundamental mistake: for, before they can ever think of claiming any blessing on the terms of this covenant, they must suppose themselves to be in his state with whom this covenant was made. But how vain a supposition this is; since it was made with Adam in a state of innocence! How weak, therefore, must that whole building be, which stands on such a foundation! And how foolish are they who thus build on the sand; who seem never to have considered, that the covenant of works was not given to man when he was 'dead in trespasses and sins,' but when he was alive to God, when he knew no sin, but was holy as God is holy, who forget, that it was never designed for the *recovery* of the favour and life of God once lost, but only for the *continuance* and increase thereof, till it should be complete in life everlasting.



2. Neither do they consider, who are thus seeking to establish their 'own righteousness, which is of the law,' what manner of obedience or righteousness that is which the law indispensably requires. It must be perfect and entire in every point, or it answers not the demand of the law. But which of you is able to perform such obedience? or, consequently, to live thereby? Who among you fulfils every jot and tittle even of the outward commandments of God? doing nothing, great or small, which God forbids? leaving nothing undone which He enjoins? speaking no *idle word*? having your conversation always 'meet to minister grace to the hearers'? and, 'whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, doing all to the glory of God'? And how much less are you able to fulfil all the inward commandments of God, those which require, that every temper and motion of your soul should be holiness unto the Lord! Are you able to 'love God with all your heart'? to love all mankind as your own soul? to 'pray without ceasing'? in everything to give thanks'? to have God always before you? and to keep every affection, desire, and thought, in obedience to His law?

3. You should farther consider, that the righteousness of the law requires, not only the obeying every command of God, negative and positive, internal and external, but likewise in the perfect degree. In every instance whatever, the voice of the law is, 'Thou shalt serve the Lord thy God with all thy strength.' It allows no abatement of any kind it excuses no defect it condemns every coming short of the full measure of obedience, and immediately pronounces a curse on the offender: it regards only the invariable rules of justice, and saith, 'I know not to show mercy.'

4. Who then can appear before such a Judge, who is 'extreme to mark what is done amiss'? How weak are they who desire to be tried at the bar where 'no flesh living can be justified'!—none of the offspring of Adam. For, suppose we did now keep every commandment with all our strength, yet one single breach, which ever was, utterly destroys our whole claim to life. If we have ever offended in any one point, this righteousness is at an end. For the law condemns all

who do not perform uninterrupted as well as perfect obedience. So that, according to the sentence of this, for him who hath once sinned, in any degree, 'there remaineth only a fearful looking for of fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries' of God.

5. Is it not then the very foolishness of folly, for fallen man to seek life by this righteousness? for man, who was 'shapen in wickedness, and in sin did his mother conceive him'? man, who is, by nature, all 'earthly, sensual, devilish'; altogether 'corrupt and abominable', in whom, till he find grace, 'dwelleth no good thing'; nay, who cannot of himself think one good thought; who is indeed all sin, a mere lump of ungodliness, and who commits sin in every breath he draws; whose actual transgressions, in word and deed, are more in number than the hairs of his head? What stupidity, what senselessness, must it be for such an unclean, guilty, helpless worm as this, to dream of seeking acceptance by his own righteousness, of living by 'the righteousness which is of the law'!

6. Now, whatsoever considerations prove the folly of trusting in the 'righteousness which is of the law,' prove equally the wisdom of submitting to the 'righteousness which is of God by faith.' This were easy to be shown with regard to each of the preceding considerations. But, to waive this, the wisdom of the first step hereto, the disclaiming our own righteousness, plainly appears from hence, that it is acting according to truth, to the real nature of things. For, what

II. 5. This extreme view of the total depravity of man, which Wesley so often insists upon in order to show how impossible it is for man to save himself by any merit of his own, needs to be corrected, as he himself later did correct it, by a consideration of the work of prevenient grace. Thus in Sermon LXXXV, iii. 4, he says: 'There is no man that is in a state of mere nature; there is no man, unless he has quenched the Spirit, that is wholly void of

the grace of God. No man living is entirely destitute of what is vulgarly called *natural conscience*. But this is not natural: it is more properly termed *preventing grace*. Every man has a greater or less measure of this, which waiteth not for the call of man.' So in his note on John i. 9 he says that this light is 'natural conscience, pointing out at least the general lines of good and evil.'

is it more, than to acknowledge with our heart as well as lips, the true state wherein we are ? to acknowledge, that we bring with us into the world a corrupt, sinful nature ; more corrupt, indeed, than we can easily conceive, or find words to express ? that hereby we are prone to all that is evil, and averse from all that is good : that we are full of pride, self-will, unruly passions, foolish desires, vile and inordinate affections ; lovers of the world, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God ? that our lives have been no better than our hearts, but many ways ungodly and unholy ; insomuch that our actual sins, both in word and deed, have been as the stars of heaven for multitude ; that, on all these accounts, we are displeasing to Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and deserve nothing from Him but indignation and wrath and death, the due wages of sin ? that we cannot, by any of our righteousness (for indeed we have none at all), nor by any of our works (for they are as the tree upon which they grow), appease the wrath of God, or avert the punishment we have justly deserved ; yea, that, if left to ourselves, we shall only wax worse and worse, sink deeper and deeper into sin, offend God more and more, both with our evil works, and with the evil tempers of our carnal mind, till we fill up the measure of our iniquities, and bring upon ourselves swift destruction ? And is not this the very state wherein by nature we are ? To acknowledge this, then, both with our heart and lips, that is, to disclaim our own righteousness, ‘the righteousness which is of the law,’ is to act according to the real nature of things, and, consequently, is an instance of true wisdom.

7. The wisdom of submitting to ‘the righteousness of faith’ appears, farther, from this consideration, that it is the righteousness of God : I mean here, it is that method of reconciliation with God which hath been chosen and established by God Himself, not only as He is the God of wisdom, but as He is the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, and of every creature which He hath made. Now, as it is not meet for man to say unto God, ‘What doest Thou ?’—as none, who is not utterly void of understanding, will contend with One that is mightier than he, with Him whose kingdom ruleth over all :

so it is true wisdom, it is a mark of sound understanding, to acquiesce in whatever He hath chosen ; to say in this, as in all things, ' It is the Lord : let Him do what seemeth Him good.'

8. It may be farther considered, that it was of mere grace, of free love, of undeserved mercy, that God hath vouchsafed to sinful man any way of reconciliation with Himself ; that we were not cut away from His hand, and utterly blotted out of His remembrance. Therefore, whatever method He is pleased to appoint, of His tender mercy, of His unmerited goodness, whereby His enemies, who have so deeply revolted from Him, so long and obstinately rebelled against Him, may still find favour in His sight, it is doubtless our wisdom to accept it with all thankfulness.

9. To mention but one consideration more. It is wisdom to aim at the best end by the best means. Now the best end which any creature can pursue is, happiness in God. And the best end a fallen creature can pursue is, the recovery of the favour and image of God. But the best, indeed the only means under heaven given to a man, whereby he may regain the favour of God, which is better than life itself, or the image of God, which is the true life of the soul, is the submitting to the ' righteousness which is of faith,' the believing in the only-begotten Son of God.

III. 1. Whosoever therefore thou art, who desirest to be forgiven and reconciled to the favour of God, do not say in thy heart, ' I must *first do this*, I must *first* conquer every sin ; break off every evil word and work, and do all good to all men ; or, I must *first* go to church, receive the Lord's supper, hear more sermons, and say more prayers.' Alas, my brother ! thou art clean gone out of the way. Thou art still ' ignorant of the righteousness of God,' and art ' seeking to establish thy own righteousness' as the ground of thy reconciliation. Knowest thou not, that thou canst do nothing but sin, till thou art reconciled to God ? Wherefore, then, dost thou say, ' I must do this and this *first*, and then I shall

III. Nothing could be more effective than this practical dealing with the excuses of the sinner. It gets right to the point every time.

believe' ? Nay, but *first believe* ! Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the propitiation for thy sins. Let this good foundation first be laid, and then thou shalt do all things well.

2. Neither say in thy heart, 'I cannot be accepted yet, because I am not *good enough*.' Who is *good enough*, who ever was, to merit acceptance at God's hands ? Was ever any child of Adam *good enough* for this ? or will any till the consummation of all things ? And, as for thee, thou art not good at all : there dwelleth in thee no good thing. And thou never wilt be, till thou believe in Jesus. Rather thou wilt find thyself worse and worse. But is there any need of being worse, in order to be accepted ? Art thou not *bad enough* already ? Indeed thou art ; and that God knoweth. And thou thyself canst not deny it. Then delay not. All things are now ready. 'Arise, and wash away thy sins.' The fountain is open. Now is the time to wash thee white in the blood of the Lamb. Now He shall 'purge' thee as 'with hyssop,' and thou shalt 'be clean' : He shall 'wash' thee, and thou shalt 'be whiter than snow.'

3. Do not say, 'But I am not *contrite enough* : I am not *sensible enough* of my sins.' I know it. I would to God thou wert more *sensible* of them, more *contrite* a thousand fold than thou art. But do not stay for this. It may be, God will make thee so, not before thou believest, but by believing. It may be, thou wilt not weep much, till thou lovest much because thou hast had much forgiven. In the meantime look unto Jesus. Behold, how He loveth thee ! What could He have done more for thee which He hath not done ?

O Lamb of God, was ever pain,  
Was ever love like Thine ?

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3. The quotation is the last two lines of the Hymn on the Crucifixion by Samuel Wesley, senr. It was written before the famous fire at the Epworth Rectory in 1709, and the MS. of it was found after the fire in the Rectory garden. John Wesley published it in his Charlestown

Hymn-Book (1736-7) ; and afterwards in the *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1739). It found a place in the Hymn-Book of 1780, and has been retained in all the subsequent editions. It begins

Behold, the Saviour of mankind  
Nailed to the shameful tree

Look steadily upon Him, till He looks on thee, and breaks thy hard heart. Then shall thy 'head' be 'waters' and thy 'eyes fountains of tears.'

4. Nor yet do thou say, 'I must *do* something more *before* I come to Christ.' I grant, supposing thy Lord should delay His coming, it were meet and right to wait for His appearing, in doing, so far as thou hast power, whatsoever He hath commanded thee. But there is no necessity for making such a supposition. How knowest thou that He will delay? Perhaps He will appear, as the dayspring from on high, before the morning light. O do not set Him a time! Expect Him every hour. Now He is nigh! even at the door!

5. And to what end wouldest thou wait for *more sincerity before* thy sins are blotted out? To make thee more worthy of the grace of God? Alas, thou art still 'establishing thy own righteousness.' He will have mercy, not because thou art worthy of it, but because His compassions fail not; not because thou art righteous, but because Jesus Christ hath atoned for thy sins.

Again: if there be anything good in *sincerity*, why dost thou expect it *before* thou hast faith?—seeing faith itself is the only root of whatever is really good and holy.

Above all, how long wilt thou forget, that whatsoever thou doest, or whatsoever thou hast, before thy sins are forgiven thee, it avails nothing with God toward the procuring of thy forgiveness! yea, and that it must all be cast behind thy back,

5. Wesley did not long maintain the implication of the second clause of this section, viz. that there can be no sincerity worth anything except as the result of faith. The question of sincerity is largely discussed in the *Minutes* of 1746, May 13. J[onathan] R[eeves] thought that he was sincere 'in some measure' before his conversion. Sincerity is then defined as 'willingness to know and do the whole will of God'; and it is laid down that God has so much regard to the sincerity of an unbeliever, 'that, if he persevere

therein, God will infallibly give him faith.' It is said to be 'one condition of our acceptance,' therefore evidently it must precede the act of faith which brings salvation. Similarly in Sermon IX, iv. 1 it is said: 'A man may be sincere in any of these states' (to wit, the natural, the legal, and the evangelical); 'for undoubtedly there may be sincere heathens, as well as sincere Jews, or Christians.' Still, the point remains that a man is not saved because of his sincerity, but because of his faith.

trampled under foot, made no account of, or thou wilt not find favour in God's sight ; because, until then, thou canst ask it as a mere sinner, guilty, lost, undone, having nothing plead, nothing to offer to God, but only the merits of His beloved Son, ' who loved *thee*, and gave Himself for *thee* ' !

6. To conclude. Whosoever thou art, O man, who hast the sentence of death in thyself, who feelest thyself a condemned sinner, and hast the wrath of God abiding on thee, unto thee saith the Lord, not, ' Do this '—perfectly obey my commands—' and live ' , but, ' Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' ' The word of faith is now unto thee ' : now, at this instant, in the present moment, in thy present state, sinner as thou art, just as thou art, believe the gospel , and ' I will be merciful unto *thy* unrighteousness, and *thy* iniquities will I remember no more.'

## SERMON VII

### THE WAY TO THE KINGDOM

THE structure of this sermon is peculiar. The first part of it is an exposition of Rom. xiv. 17, 'The kingdom of God is not meat and drink,' &c.; the second is an application based on the second clause of Mark i. 15, 'Repent ye, and believe the gospel.' On Sunday, June 6, 1742, Wesley was at Epworth, and offered his services to Mr. Romley the curate, 'but he did not care to accept of my assistance. The church was exceeding full in the afternoon, a rumour being spread that I was to preach. But the sermon on Quench not the Spirit was not suitable to the expectation of many of the hearers. Mr. Romley told them that one of the most dangerous ways of quenching the Spirit was by enthusiasm; and enlarged on the character of an enthusiast in a very florid and oratorical manner. After sermon John Taylor stood in the churchyard, and gave notice, as the people were coming out, "Mr. Wesley, not being permitted to preach in the church, designs to preach here at six o'clock." Accordingly at six I came, and found such a congregation as I believe Epworth never saw before. I stood near the east end of the church, upon my father's tombstone, and cried, "The kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." ' He remained eight days at Epworth, preaching every day from his father's tombstone, his texts being, on Monday, Eph. ii. 8—the Oxford Sermon No. I; on Tuesday Rom. iv. 5 (Sermon V); on Wednesday Luke xviii. 10; on Thursday Rom. viii. 15 (Sermon IX); on Friday Ezek. xxxvii. 1 seq.; on Saturday Rom. x. 5 (Sermon VI), and on Sunday Matt. v. 1 (Sermon XVI). In a letter to Mr. John Smith, dated March 25, 1747, he says, 'I am well assured I did far more good by preaching three days on my father's tomb than I did by preaching three years in his pulpit.' The Rev. John Whitelamb, who was for a time Samuel Wesley's curate at Epworth, and married poor deformed Mary (Molly) Wesley in 1734, but lost her in November of the same year, came over from Wroot, where he was still rector, though his grief at the death of his wife and her baby had driven him into unbelief, and heard John preach on the Tuesday. He wrote on the Friday to Wesley: 'I saw you at Epworth on Tuesday evening. Your way of thinking is so extraordinary that your presence creates



an awe, as though you were an inhabitant of another world. I cannot refrain from tears when I reflect, this is the man who at Oxford was more than a father to me, this is he whom I have heard expound, or dispute publicly, or preach at St. Mary's, with such applause; and—oh, that I should ever add—whom I have lately heard preach at Epworth, on his father's tombstone!

There is little doubt that this sermon, or at any rate the first part of it, was the first of this series of 'tombstone' sermons. It was a favourite of Wesley's, and is often mentioned in the *Journal* during this and the following years; and also in the sermon list at the end of the Standard Edition of the *Journal*. It is quite different from the one on the same text, No. XLVII, on The Repentance of Believers, which was written in April 1767.

To the modern reader it seems strange that a sermon on The Kingdom of God should make no reference at all to the social reconstruction demanded by Christianity; but Wesley was right in thinking that the only way to social salvation is through the salvation of individual men and women. The kingdom in the heart must come before the kingdom in society can be realized. Schemes for social reform will never work until the men who constitute society are themselves saved.

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*The kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.*—  
MARK i. 15.

THESE words naturally lead us to consider, first, the nature of true religion, here termed by our Lord 'the kingdom of God,' which, saith He, 'is at hand'; and, secondly, the way thereto, which He points out in those words, 'Repent ye, and believe the gospel.'

I. 1. We are, first, to consider the nature of true religion, here termed by our Lord 'the kingdom of God.' The same expression the great Apostle uses in his Epistle to the Romans, where he likewise explains his Lord's words, saying, 'The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost' (Rom. xiv. 17).

2. 'The kingdom of God,' or true religion, 'is not meat and drink.' It is well known, that not only the unconverted Jews, but great numbers of those who had received the faith of Christ, were, notwithstanding, 'zealous of the law' (Acts

xxi. 20), even the ceremonial law of Moses. Whatsoever, therefore, they found written therein, either concerning meat and drink offerings, or the distinction between clean and unclean meats, they not only observed themselves, but vehemently pressed the same, even on those 'among the Gentiles' (or Heathens) 'who were turned to God'; yea, to such a degree, that some of them taught, wheresoever they came among them, 'Except ye be circumcised, and keep the law' (the whole ritual law), 'ye cannot be saved' (Acts xv. i, 24).

3. In opposition to these, the Apostle declares, both here and in many other places, that true religion does not consist in *meat* and *drink*, or in any ritual observances; nor, indeed, in any outward thing whatever; in anything exterior to the heart, the whole substance thereof lying in 'righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.'

4. Not in any *outward thing*; such as *forms* or *ceremonies* even of the most excellent kind. Supposing these to be ever so decent and significant, ever so expressive of inward things, supposing them ever so helpful, not only to the vulgar, whose thought reaches little farther than their sight, but even to men of understanding, men of stronger capacities, as doubtless they may sometimes be, yea, supposing them, as in the case of the Jews, to be appointed by God Himself; yet even during the period of time wherein that appointment remains in force true religion does not principally consist therein; nay, strictly speaking, not at all. How much more must this hold concerning such rites and forms as are only of human appointment. The religion of Christ rises infinitely higher, and lies immensely deeper, than all these. These are good in their place; just so far as they are in fact subservient to true religion. And if we were superstition to object against them, while they are applied only as occasional helps to human weakness. But let no man carry them farther. Let no man dream that they have an

I. Par. 4. This declaration as to the value of forms and ceremonies is Wesley's answer to those who, like poor Whitelamb, were scandalized at his preaching in the open air and using extemporary prayer in

his services. It was appropriate that it should be made at an open-air service. But he never undervalued decency and order in divine service as long as it was not made a substitute for true religion.

intrinsic worth, or that religion cannot subsist without them. This were to make them an abomination to the Lord.

5. The nature of religion is so far from consisting in these, in forms of worship, or rites and ceremonies, that it does not properly consist in any outward actions, of what kind soever. It is true, a man cannot have any religion who is guilty of vicious, immoral actions, or who does to others what he would not they should do unto him, if he were in the same circumstances. And it is also true, that he can have no real religion who 'knows to do good, and doeth it not.' Yet may a man both abstain from outward evil, and do good, and still have no religion. Yea, two persons may do the same outward work, suppose feeding the hungry, or clothing the naked, and, in the meantime, one of these may be truly religious, and the other have no religion at all, for the one may act from the love of God, and the other from the love of praise. So manifest it is, that although true religion naturally leads to every good word and work, yet the real nature thereof lies deeper still, even in 'the hidden man of the heart.'

6. I say of *the heart*. For neither does religion consist in orthodoxy, or right opinions; which, although they are not properly outward things, are not in the heart, but the understanding. A man may be orthodox in every point; he may not only espouse right opinions, but zealously defend them against all opposers, he may think justly concerning the incarnation of our Lord, concerning the ever-blessed Trinity, and every other doctrine contained in the oracles of God, he may assent to all the three creeds—that called the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian, and yet it is possible he may have no religion at all, no more than a Jew, Turk, or Pagan. He may be almost as orthodox—as the devil (though indeed not altogether; for every man errs in something, whereas

6. This distinction between the heart and the understanding is not scriptural. As has been already pointed out, the word translated 'heart' in the New Testament does not mean the emotions only, but includes the whole psychical nature,

intellect, emotion, and will. A religion which is all feeling is as imperfect as a religion of pure intellect. True religion implies intellectual conviction, emotional motive, and ethical determination, and is a function of the whole man.

we cannot well conceive him to hold any erroneous opinion), and may, all the while, be as great a stranger as he to the religion of the heart.

7. This alone is religion, truly so called : this alone is in the sight of God of great price. The Apostle sums it all up in three particulars, ' righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' And, first, *righteousness*. We cannot be at a loss concerning this, if we remember the words of our Lord, describing the two grand branches thereof, on which ' hang all the Law and the Prophets ' : ' Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength : this is the first and great commandment ' (Mark xii. 30) , the first and great branch of Christian righteousness. Thou shalt delight thyself in the Lord thy God ; thou shalt seek and find all happiness in Him. He shall be ' thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward,' in time and in eternity. All thy bones shall say, ' Whom have I in heaven but Thee ? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee.' Thou shalt hear and fulfil His word, who saith, ' My son, give me thy heart.' And, having given Him thy heart, thy inmost soul, to reign there without a rival, thou mayest well cry out, in the fullness of thy heart, ' I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my strong rock, and

7. That ' love is the fulfilling of the law ' is incontestable ; but love is not the same thing as righteousness. Love is the root, righteousness is the fruit. In the religious writings of the eighteenth century, and in some of the periodicals, such as the *Spectator*, and particularly the *Rambler*, there is abundance of good ethical teaching ; but little or nothing is said about the religious motive, the love to God and man, which alone makes morality in the fullest sense possible. Therefore Wesley laid all the stress of his teaching on the emotional motive for morality. In the *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, entire sancti-

fication is defined as perfect love. ' A Methodist is one who loves the Lord his God with all his heart and, loving God, he loves his neighbour as himself.' This was most necessary and salutary teaching ; but there is a danger, as experience has sadly shown, that it may result in the under-valuing, or even the neglect, of practical ethics. This Wesley guarded against in the following paragraph. It has been too common to find men who made the loudest and most exultant profession of entire sanctification dishonest in business or lax in their private life. It is the general experience of missionaries to the less civilized races,

my defence, my Saviour, my God, and my might, in whom I will trust, my buckler, the horn also of my salvation, and my refuge.'

8. And the second commandment is like unto this, the second great branch of Christian righteousness is closely and inseparably connected therewith, even, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' *Thou shalt love*—thou shalt embrace with the most tender good-will, the most earnest and cordial affection, the most inflamed desires of preventing or removing all evil, and of procuring for him every possible good. *Thy neighbour*—that is, not only thy friend, thy kinsman, or thy acquaintance, not only the virtuous, the friendly, him that loves thee, that prevents or returns thy kindness, but every child of man, every human creature, every soul which God hath made; not excepting him whom thou never hast seen in the flesh, whom thou knowest not, either by face or name; not excepting him whom thou knowest to be evil and unthankful, him that still despitefully uses and persecutes thee: him thou shalt love *as thyself*; with the same invariable thirst after his happiness in every kind, the same unwearied care to screen him from whatever might grieve or hurt either his soul or body.

9. Now is not this love 'the fulfilling of the law'? the sum

like the Fijians or the Australian aborigines, that their converts very quickly attain to a remarkable degree of religious emotion, without any commensurate development of the ethical sense. A negro may give a most rapturous address in a love-feast, with tears of sincere joy running down his face, and then go away and rob a hen-roost without any sense of incongruity. One of the most unscrupulous business men I ever knew could pray like a seraph and preach like a prophet; and I do not think that he was a hypocrite either; only he kept his religious emotion and his business practice in water-tight compartments, Wesley's

attitude was most natural and indeed necessary in an age when any expression of religious experience was denounced as a manifestation of enthusiasm and presumption; but in our day it is very needful to emphasize the ethical side of religion, and to insist that no rapturous realization of the love of God can excuse a man from the duty of carrying on his business on the principles of the Sermon on the Mount, and paying twenty shillings in the pound; and that this is what St. Paul means when he says that the kingdom of God is righteousness.

8. 'Prevents,' i.e. anticipates.

of all Christian righteousness? of all inward righteousness,—for it necessarily implies ‘bowels of mercies, humbleness of mind’ (seeing ‘love is not puffed up’), ‘gentleness, meekness, longsuffering’ (for love ‘is not provoked,’ but ‘believeth, hopeth, endureth all things’): and of all outward righteousness,—for ‘love worketh no evil to his neighbour,’ either by word or deed. It cannot willingly hurt or grieve any one. And it is zealous of good works. Every lover of mankind, as he hath opportunity, ‘doeth good unto all men,’ being (without partiality, and without hypocrisy) ‘full of mercy and good fruits.’

10. But true religion, or a heart right toward God and man, implies happiness as well as holiness. For it is not only ‘righteousness,’ but also ‘peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.’ What peace? ‘The peace of God,’ which God only can give, and the world cannot take away, the peace which ‘passeth all understanding,’ all barely rational conception, being a supernatural sensation, a divine taste, of ‘the powers of the world to come’; such as the natural man knoweth not, how wise soever in the things of this world, nor, indeed, can he know it, in his present state, ‘because it is spiritually discerned.’ It is a peace that banishes all doubt, all painful uncertainty; the Spirit of God bearing witness with the spirit of a Christian, that he is ‘a child of God.’ And it banishes fear, all such fear as hath torment: the fear of the wrath of God, the fear of hell; the fear of the devil, and, in particular, the fear of death: he that hath the peace of God, desiring, if it were the will of God, ‘to depart, and to be with Christ.’

11. With this peace of God, wherever it is fixed in the soul, there is also ‘joy in the Holy Ghost’, joy wrought in the heart by the Holy Ghost, by the ever-blessed Spirit of God. He it is that worketh in us that calm, humble rejoicing in God, through Christ Jesus, ‘by whom we have now received the atonement,’ *καταλλαγὴν*, the reconciliation with God, and that enables us

11. In rendering *καταλλαγὴν* reconciliation, Wesley, as so often, anticipates the Revised Version. He is equally accurate in substituting

‘happy’ for ‘blessed’ in the quotation from Psa. xxxii. 1. The Hebrew word, as in Psa. i. 1, is a plural noun: ‘Oh the joys of the man,’ &c.

boldly to confirm the truth of the royal Psalmist's declaration, 'Blessed is the man' (or rather, *happy*) 'whose unrighteousness is forgiven, and whose sin is covered.' He it is that inspires the Christian soul with that even, solid joy, which arises from the testimony of the Spirit that he is a child of God, and that gives him to 'rejoice with joy unspeakable, in hope of the glory of God', hope both of the glorious image of God, which is in part, and shall be fully, 'revealed in him', and of that crown of glory which fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for him.

12. This holiness and happiness, joined in one, are sometimes styled, in the inspired writings, 'the kingdom of God' (as by our Lord in the text), and sometimes, 'the kingdom of heaven.' It is termed, 'the kingdom of God,' because it is the immediate fruit of God's reigning in the soul. So soon as ever He takes unto Himself His mighty power, and sets up His throne in our hearts, they are instantly filled with this 'righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' It is called 'the kingdom of heaven,' because it is (in a degree) heaven opened in the soul. For whosoever they are that experience this, they can aver before angels and men,

Everlasting life is won,  
Glory is on earth begun ;

according to the constant tenor of Scripture, which everywhere bears record, God 'hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son' (reigning in his heart) 'hath life,' even life everlasting (1 John v. 11, 12). For 'this is life eternal, to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent' (John xvii. 3). And they to whom this

12. The first quotation is the last two lines of verse 6 of Charles Wesley's Hymn after the Sacrament, beginning 'Sons of God, triumphant rise,' first published in the *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1739), pt. ii. (vol. i. p. 170, in Osborn's *Poetical Works of J. and C. Wesley*). The first four verses were used by Toplady in his

*Psalms and Hymns* (1786). The whole verse runs :

Grace our every thought controls,  
Heaven is opened in our souls,  
Everlasting life is won,  
Glory is on earth begun.

The lines in the second quotation are the conclusion of the Paraphrase

is given may confidently address God, though they were in the midst of a fiery furnace,—

Thee, Lord, safe-shielded by Thy power,  
Thee, Son of God, JEHOVAH, we adore ;  
In form of man descending to appear :  
To Thee be ceaseless hallelujahs given,  
Praise, as in heaven Thy throne, we offer here ;  
For where Thy presence is display'd, is heaven.

13. And this ' kingdom of God,' or of heaven, ' is at hand.' As these words were originally spoken, they implied that ' the time ' was then fulfilled, God being ' made manifest in the flesh,' when He would set up His kingdom among men, and reign in the hearts of His people. And is not the time now fulfilled ? For, ' Lo,' (saith He), ' I am with you always,' you who preach remission of sins in My name, ' even unto the end of the world ' (Matt. xxviii. 20). Wheresoever, therefore, the gospel of Christ is preached, this His ' kingdom is nigh at hand.' It is not far from every one of you. Ye may this hour enter thereinto, if so be ye hearken to His voice, ' Repent ye, and believe the gospel.'

II. 1. This is the way, walk ye in it. And, first, ' repent ' ; that is, know yourselves. This is the first repentance, previous to faith ; even conviction, or self-knowledge. Awake, then ; thou that sleepest. Know thyself to be a sinner, and what manner of sinner thou art. Know that corruption of thy inmost nature, whereby thou art very far gone from original righteousness, whereby ' the flesh lusteth ' always ' contrary to the Spirit,' through that ' carnal mind ' which ' is enmity

of the Song of the Three Children (generally known as the Benedicite) by the Rev. Mark Le-Pla, vicar of Finchingfield, in Essex. It was written as a thanksgiving to God after a recovery from sickness. In the *Journal*, March 3, 1740, Wesley quotes two other lines from the same poem :

He deigns his influence to diffuse,  
Secret, refreshing as the silent dews;

and the last line of the present passage is quoted in the *Journal*, February 18, 1766. The whole poem was published in *Moral and Sacred Poems* (1744), vol. ii. p. 107. The first line here is short of two syllables, indicated by a dash in the 1771 edition of the sermon. The missing word is ' therefore ' :

Thee, therefore, Lord, safe-shielded by Thy  
pow'r.



against God,' which 'is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' Know that thou art corrupted in every power, in every faculty of thy soul, that thou art totally corrupted in every one of these, all the foundations being out of course. The eyes of thine understanding are darkened, so that they cannot discern God, or the things of God. The clouds of ignorance and error rest upon thee, and cover thee with the shadow of death. Thou knowest nothing yet as thou oughtest to know, neither God, nor the world, nor thyself. Thy will is no longer the will of God, but is utterly perverse and distorted, averse from all good, from all which God loves, and prone to all evil, to every abomination which God hateth. Thy affections are alienated from God, and scattered abroad over all the earth. All thy passions, both thy desires and aversions, thy joys and sorrows, thy hopes and fears, are out of frame, are either undue in their degree, or placed on undue objects. So that there is no soundness in thy soul; but 'from the crown of the head, to the sole of the foot' (to use the strong expression of the prophet), there are only 'wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores.'

2. Such is the inbred corruption of thy heart, of thy very inmost nature. And what manner of branches canst thou expect to grow from such an evil root? Hence springs unbelief; ever departing from the living God, saying, 'Who is the Lord, that I should serve Him? Tush! Thou God carest not for it.' Hence independence, affecting to be like the Most High. Hence pride, in all its forms, teaching thee to say, 'I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing.' From this evil fountain flow forth the bitter streams of vanity, thirst of praise, ambition, covetousness, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. From this arise anger, hatred, malice, revenge, envy, jealousy, evil surmisings: from this, all the foolish and hurtful lusts that now 'pierce thee through with many sorrows,' and, if not timely prevented, will at length drown thy soul in everlasting perdition.

3. And what fruits can grow on such branches as these? Only such as are bitter and evil continually. Of pride cometh contention, vain boasting, seeking and receiving praise of men, and so robbing God of that glory which He cannot give unto

another. Of the lust of the flesh come gluttony or drunkenness, luxury or sensuality, fornication, uncleanness; variously defiling that body which was designed for a temple of the Holy Ghost: of unbelief, every evil word and work. But the time would fail, shouldest thou reckon up all, all the idle words thou hast spoken, provoking the Most High, grieving the Holy One of Israel; all the evil works thou hast done, either wholly evil in themselves, or, at least, not done to the glory of God. For thy actual sins are more than thou art able to express, more than the hairs of thy head. Who can number the sands of the sea, or the drops of rain, or thy iniquities?

4. And knowest thou not that 'the wages of sin is death'?—death, not only temporal, but eternal. 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die', for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. It shall die the second death. This is the sentence, to 'be punished' with never-ending death, 'with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.' Knowest thou not that every sinner *ἐνοχός ἐστι τῇ γέννῃ τοῦ πυρός*, not properly 'is in danger of hell-fire'; that expression is far too weak; but rather 'is under the sentence of hell-fire', doomed already, just dragging to execution. Thou art guilty of everlasting death. It is the just reward of thy inward and outward wickedness. It is just that the sentence should now take place. Dost thou see, dost thou feel this? Art thou thoroughly convinced that thou deservest God's wrath, and everlasting damnation? Would God do thee no wrong, if He now commanded the earth to open, and swallow thee up?—if thou wert now to go down quick into the pit, into the fire that never shall be quenched? If God hath given thee truly to repent, thou hast a deep sense that these things are so, and that it is of His mere mercy thou art not consumed, swept away from the face of the earth.

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II. 4. The Greek phrase quoted means 'liable to,' not 'under sentence of'; the sinner has committed a crime, the penalty of which is the

Gehenna of fire, but he is not yet sentenced. Thus Xenophon speaks of a man as 'liable to an indictment.'

5. And what wilt thou do to appease the wrath of God, to atone for all thy sins, and to escape the punishment thou hast so justly deserved? Alas, thou canst do nothing; nothing that will in any wise make amends to God for one evil work, or word, or thought. If thou couldst now do all things well, if from this very hour till thy soul should return to God thou couldst perform perfect, uninterrupted obedience, even this would not atone for what is past. The not increasing thy debt would not discharge it. It would still remain as great as ever. Yea, the present and future obedience of all the men upon earth, and all the angels in heaven, would never make satisfaction to the justice of God for one single sin. How vain, then, was the thought of atoning for thy own sins, by anything thou couldst do! It costeth far more to redeem one soul, than all mankind is able to pay. So that were there no other help for a guilty sinner, without doubt he must have perished everlastingly.

6. But suppose perfect obedience, for the time to come, could atone for the sins that are past, this would profit thee nothing; for thou art not able to perform it; no, not in any one point. Begin now: make the trial. Shake off that outward sin that so easily besetteth thee. Thou canst not. How then wilt thou change thy life from all evil to all good? Indeed, it is impossible to be done, unless first thy heart be changed. For, so long as the tree remains evil, it cannot bring forth good fruit. But art thou able to change thy own heart, from all sin to all holiness? to quicken a soul that is dead in sin—dead to God, and alive only to the world? No more than thou art able to quicken a dead body, to raise to life him that lieth in the grave. Yea, thou art not able to quicken thy soul in any degree, no more than to give any degree of life to the dead body. Thou canst do nothing, more or less, in this matter, thou art utterly without strength. To be deeply sensible of this, how helpless thou art, as well as how guilty and how sinful,—this is that ‘repentance not to be repented of,’ which is the forerunner of the kingdom of God.

7. If to this lively conviction of thy inward and outward sins, of thy utter guiltiness and helplessness, there be added

suitable affections,—sorrow of heart, for having despised thy own mercies ; remorse, and self-condemnation, having thy mouth stopped ; shame to lift up thine eyes to heaven , fear of the wrath of God abiding on thee, of His curse hanging over thy head, and of the fiery indignation ready to devour those who forget God, and obey not our Lord Jesus Christ , earnest desire to escape from that indignation, to cease from evil, and learn to do well,—then I say unto thee, in the name of the Lord, ‘ Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.’ One step more, and thou shalt enter in. Thou dost ‘ repent.’ Now, ‘ believe the gospel.’

8. *The gospel* (that is, good tidings, good news for guilty, helpless sinners), in the largest sense of the word, means, the whole revelation made to men by Jesus Christ ; and sometimes the whole account of what our Lord did and suffered while He tabernacled among men. The substance of all is, ‘ Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners ’ ; or, ‘ God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, to the end we might not perish, but have everlasting life ’ ; or, ‘ He was bruised for our transgressions, He was wounded for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him ; and with His stripes we are healed.’

9. *Believe* this, and the kingdom of God is thine. By faith thou attainest the promise. ‘ He pardoneth and absolveth all that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe His holy gospel.’ As soon as ever God hath spoken to thy heart, ‘ Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee,’ His kingdom comes : thou hast ‘ righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.’

10. Only beware thou do not deceive thy own soul, with regard to the nature of this faith. It is not, as some have fondly conceived, a bare assent to the truth of the Bible, of

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8. ‘ Tabernacled ’ is the literal translation of the Greek word used by St. John, and is given as such in the margin of the R.V.

9. ‘ He pardoneth,’ &c., is from the Absolution in the Order for Morning Service.

10. ‘ As some have fondly conceived.’ Wesley is thinking especially of the Sandemanians or Glasites, concerning whose teaching see introduction to Sermon L (below, vol. ii, p. 442).

the articles of our Creed, or of all that is contained in the Old and New Testament. The devils believe this, as well as I or thou! And yet they are devils still. But it is, over and above this, a sure trust in the mercy of God, through Christ Jesus. It is a confidence in a pardoning God. It is a divine evidence or conviction that 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing to them their' former 'trespasses', and in particular, that the Son of God hath loved *me*, and given Himself for *me*, and that I, even I, am now reconciled to God by the blood of the cross.

11. Dost thou thus believe? Then the peace of God is in thy heart, and sorrow and sighing flee away. Thou art no longer in doubt of the love of God, it is clear as the noon-day sun. Thou criest out, 'My song shall be always of the loving-kindness of the Lord with my mouth will I ever be telling of Thy truth, from one generation to another.' Thou art no longer afraid of hell, or death, or him that had once the power of death, the devil, no, nor painfully afraid of God Himself; only thou hast a tender, filial fear of offending Him. Dost thou believe? Then thy 'soul doth magnify the Lord,' and thy 'spirit rejoiceth in God thy Saviour.' Thou rejoicest in that thou hast 'redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.' Thou rejoicest in that 'Spirit of adoption,' which crieth in thy heart, 'Abba, Father!' Thou rejoicest in a 'hope full of immortality', in reaching forth unto the 'mark for the prize of thy high calling'; in an earnest expectation of all the good things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.

12. Dost thou now believe? Then 'the love of God is' now 'shed abroad in thy heart.' Thou lovest Him, because He first loved us. And, because thou lovest God, thou lovest thy brother also. And being filled with 'love, peace, joy,' thou art also filled with 'long-suffering, gentleness, fidelity, goodness, meekness, temperance,' and all the other fruits of the same Spirit, in a word, with whatever dispositions are holy, are heavenly, or divine. For while thou 'beholdest with open,' uncovered 'face' (the veil now being taken away) 'the glory of the Lord,' His glorious love, and the glorious

image wherein thou wast created, thou art 'changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord.'

13. This repentance, this faith, this peace, joy, love; this change from glory to glory, is what the wisdom of the world has voted to be madness, mere enthusiasm, utter distraction. But thou, O man of God, regard them not; be thou moved by none of these things. Thou knowest in whom thou hast believed. See that no man take thy crown. Whereunto thou hast already attained, hold fast, and follow, till thou attain all the great and precious promises. And thou who hast not yet known Him, let not vain men make thee ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Be thou in nothing terrified by those who speak evil of the things which they know not. God will soon turn thy heaviness into joy. Oh, let not thy hands hang down! Yet a little longer, and He will take away thy fears, and give thee the spirit of a sound mind. He is nigh 'that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that rose again, who is even now at the right hand of God, making intercession' for thee.

Now cast thyself on the Lamb of God, with all thy sins, how many soever they be, and 'an entrance shall' now 'be ministered unto thee into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ'!

13. 'Mere enthusiasm.' The *Weekly Advertiser* for June 13, 1741, suggests the erection of a Methodist hall on Blackheath. The main hall is to have as a decoration a piece of statuary in which the main figure is to be Enthusiasm, sitting in an easy-chair, and just delivered of two beauteous babes, Superstition and Infidelity. The Bishop of Lichfield, in a charge published in 1745, says, 'All pretensions to the Spirit are vain and insignificant, as they are claimed by modern enthusiasts.' In a tract of 1740 the Methodists are called 'crack-brained enthusiasts and profane hypocrites.' Dr. Joseph Trapp in the same year calls them

'a new sect of enthusiasts, or hypocrites, or both.' Wesley in *Farther Appeal*, Part II (1745), says: 'To object *enthusiasm* to any person or doctrine is but a decent method of begging the question. But what does he mean by *enthusiasm*? Perhaps nothing at all: few have any distinct idea of its meaning. I believe thinking men mean by *enthusiasm* a sort of religious madness; a *false imagination* of being inspired by God. And by an *enthusiast*, one that *fancies* himself under the influence of the Holy Ghost, when, in fact, he is not. Let him prove me guilty of this who can.'

## SERMON VIII

### THE FIRST-FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT

IN the *Journal*, June 25, 1745, Wesley says: 'We rode to St. Just. I preached at seven to the largest congregation I have seen since my coming. At the meeting of the earnest, loving society all our hearts were in a flame: and again at five in the morning, while I explained "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."' On July 15 he read prayers and preached on this text at Laneast church. From the nature of its contents, this sermon was not suitable for general use; it needed a congregation of believers, and there are few records of its being preached either in the *Journal* or the Sermon List. But no doubt the substance of it was part of the continuous exposition of the Epistle to the Romans which was often given by Wesley to his societies. It shows a distinct advance on his views of the nature of sin and its continuance in believers suggested in some of the earlier sermons; indeed, it is a sort of first sketch for Sermon XLVI on Sin in Believers.

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*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.—ROM. viii. 1.*

1. BY 'them which are in Christ Jesus,' St. Paul evidently means, those who truly believe in Him; those who, 'being justified by faith, have peace with God through our Lord

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Par. 1. This paragraph shows that Wesley had not quite fully appreciated the force of the characteristic Pauline phrase 'in Christ.' It is true that he does put it clearly enough in I. 1 below; but in his present thinking faith was so much concerned with justification, that he hardly realizes its equal importance as the means of entering into vital fellowship with Christ. In the N.T. the verb πιστεύειν in the sense of saving

faith has two constructions: St. John always speaks of saving faith as πιστεύειν εἰς Χριστόν, believing into Christ, i.e. believing so as to be united vitally with Christ; St. Paul, when he is thinking of justification, says πιστεύειν ἐπὶ Χριστῷ or ἐπὶ Χριστόν—i.e. believing upon Christ; but he also uses St. John's construction both in his Epistles and in his sermons reported in the Acts of the Apostles; and his favourite phrase

Jesus Christ.' They who thus believe do no longer 'walk after the flesh,' no longer follow the motions of corrupt nature, but 'after the Spirit', both their thoughts, words, and works are under the direction of the blessed Spirit of God.

2. 'There is therefore now no condemnation to' these. There is no condemnation to them from God, for He hath *justified* them 'freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Jesus.' He hath forgiven all their iniquities, and blotted out all their sins. And there is no condemnation to them from within, for they 'have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that they might know the things which are freely given to them of God' (1 Cor. ii. 12), which Spirit 'beareth witness with their spirits, that they are the children of God.' And to this is added the testimony of their conscience, 'that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, they have had their conversation in the world' (2 Cor. i. 12).

3. But because this scripture has been so frequently misunderstood, and that in so dangerous a manner, because such multitudes of 'unlearned and unstable men' (οἱ ἀμαθεῖς καὶ ἀστήρικτοι, men untaught of God, and consequently unestablished in the truth which is after godliness) have wrested it to their own destruction; I propose to show, as clearly as I can, first, who those are 'which are in Christ Jesus,' and 'walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit', and, secondly, how 'there is no condemnation to' these. I shall conclude with some practical inferences.

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in Christ' implies this. Justifying faith rests upon Christ; sanctifying faith enters into union with Him. Consequently, when here Paul speaks of 'them which are in Christ Jesus,' he does not mean primarily those who are justified by faith, but those who are made one with Christ. As the late Dr. J. H. Moulton says (*Gram. of N.T. Greek*, Proleg. 68): 'To repose one's trust upon God or Christ was well expressed by πιστεύειν

ἐπὶ, the dative suggesting more of the state, and the accusative more of the initial act of faith; while εἰς recalls at once the bringing of the soul into that mystical union which Paul loved to express by ἐν Χριστῷ.'

3. Both the adjectives in the Greek quoted are hapax legomena in the N.T. Their meaning is 'untaught' and 'unstable'; Wesley's addition 'untaught of God' is hardly in the text.



I. 1. First, I am to show, who those are that 'are in Christ Jesus.' And are they not those who believe in His name? those who are 'found in Him, not having their own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God by faith'? These, 'who have redemption through His blood,' are properly said to be *in Him*, for they dwell in Christ, and Christ in them. They are joined unto the Lord in one Spirit. They are ingrafted into Him, as branches into the vine. They are united, as members to their head, in a manner which words cannot express, nor could it before enter into their hearts to conceive.

2. Now 'whosoever abideth in Him, sinneth not', 'walketh not after the flesh.' The flesh, in the usual language of St. Paul, signifies corrupt nature. In this sense he uses the word, writing to the Galatians, 'The works of the flesh are manifest' (Gal. v. 19), and a little before, 'Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust' (or desire) 'of the flesh' (ver. 16). To prove which, namely, that those who 'walk by the Spirit' do not 'fulfil the lusts of the flesh,' he immediately adds, 'For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit lusteth against the flesh (for these are contrary to each other); that ye may not do the things which ye would.' So the words are

I. 2. The psychology of St. Paul receives much light from the theory of evolution. It may be expressed thus:—

ἄνθρωπος = σῶμα + ψυχή + πνεῦμα:  
σάρξ = σῶμα + ψυχή.

Man = Body + Soul + Spirit: Flesh = Body + Soul.

The flesh, i.e. the body and (animal) soul, was first developed; then when a certain point of development had been reached, the spirit, or moral, self-conscious, personal self was super-added. The flesh is not 'corrupt,' but non-moral; sin emerges as the result of the inevitable conflict between the deep-seated instincts and desires of the flesh and the law of duty. A dog fights with

and kills another dog; but he does not commit sin: the act is neither right nor wrong, but non-moral. A man does exactly the same thing, fulfilling the desire of the flesh and the soul against the law of duty, which forbids murder; and he is a sinner. By his flesh man is akin to the lower animals and shares their instincts and desires; by his spirit he is a partaker of the divine nature. The flesh has the advantage of long tenure and established habit, and is in constant conflict with the spirit, which can only prevail by the reinforcement which comes from union by faith with the Divine Spirit. See introduction to Sermon V.

'Desire' is a better translation than lust, which has been narrowed down

literally translated (*ὥστε μὴ ἂν θέλητε ταῦτα ποιῆτε*), not, 'So that ye cannot do the things that ye would', as if the flesh overcame the Spirit: a translation which hath not only nothing to do with the original text of the Apostle, but likewise makes his whole argument nothing worth, yea, asserts just the reverse of what he is proving.

3. They who are of Christ, who abide in Him, 'have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts.' They abstain from all those works of the flesh; from 'adultery and fornication' from 'uncleanness and lasciviousness', from 'idolatry witchcraft, hatred, variance'; from 'emulations, wrath strife, sedition, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness revellings'; from every design, and word, and work, to which the corruption of nature leads. Although they feel the root of bitterness in themselves, yet are they endued with power from on high to trample it continually under foot, so that it cannot 'spring up to trouble them'; insomuch that every fresh assault which they undergo only gives them fresh occasion of praise, of crying out, 'Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

4. They now 'walk after the Spirit,' both in their heart and lives. They are taught of Him to love God and their neighbour, with a love which is as 'a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.' And by Him they are led into every

in modern speech to one particular form of desire. The Greek word is quite general, and includes all the desires of the flesh and of the mind.

'That ye may not do,' &c. The old view, that *ὥστε* always expresses purpose in the N.T. as in Attic Greek, has now been definitely disproved. It is sometimes used like our 'that,' to introduce a noun-sentence, and sometimes even of result, as in this passage. The meaning is not 'that ye may not do,' but 'so that ye do not the things which ye would.' The best comment on this passage is Rom. vii. 19, ss.: 'For I do not do the good

which I will; but the evil which I will not, that I practise.' This is ascribed to 'the sin which dwelleth in me,' 'the law in the members or bodily structure'—in other words the inherited strength of the animal instincts and passions.

3. 'Root of bitterness.' This application of Heb. xii. 15 is not justifiable. It is quoted from Deut. xxix. 18, and the reference is to individuals who prove a root of bitterness in the community by falling from the grace of God. Wesley takes it to mean the risings of fleshly desire in the mind of the believer. See II. § below.

holy desire, into every divine and heavenly temper, till every thought which arises in their heart is holiness unto the Lord.

5. They who 'walk after the Spirit' are also led by Him into all holiness of conversation. Their 'speech is always in grace, seasoned with salt', with the love and fear of God. 'No corrupt communication comes out of their mouth, but only that which is good,' that which is 'to the use of edifying,' which is 'meet to minister grace to the hearers.' And herein likewise do they exercise themselves day and night, to do only the things which please God, in all their outward behaviour to follow Him 'who left us an example that we might tread in His steps'; in all their intercourse with their neighbour, to walk in justice, mercy, and truth, and 'whatsoever they do,' in every circumstance of life, to 'do all to the glory of God.'

6. These are they who indeed 'walk after the Spirit.' Being filled with faith and with the Holy Ghost, they possess in their hearts, and show forth in their lives, in the whole course of their words and actions, the genuine fruits of the Spirit of God, namely, 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance,' and whatsoever else is lovely or praiseworthy. 'They adorn in all things the gospel of God our Saviour', and give full proof to all mankind, that they are indeed actuated by the same Spirit 'which raised up Jesus from the dead.'

II. 1. I proposed to show, in the second place, how 'there is no condemnation to them which are' thus 'in Christ Jesus,' and thus 'walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.'

And, first, to believers in Christ, walking thus, 'there is no condemnation' on account of their past sins. God condemneth them not for any of these they are as though they

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5. 'Conversation' in 1 Pet. i. 15 means conduct, behaviour, not only speech; and is so used by Wesley here, as the later part of the paragraph shows.

'Seasoned with salt'—i.e., as the parallel passage in Eph. iv. 29, 'Let no corrupt speech proceed out of

your mouth,' shows, kept wholesome by the grace of God. The notion that the Apostle is thinking of the 'Attic salt' of wit is quite foreign to his train of thought.

6. Fidelity, not faith, is certainly the meaning of the Apostle in this passage.

had never been, they are cast 'as a stone into the depth of the sea,' and He remembereth them no more. God, having 'set forth His Son to be a propitiation' for them 'through faith in His blood,' hath declared unto them 'His righteousness for the remission of the sins that are past.' He layeth therefore none of these to their charge; their memorial is perished with them.

2. And there is no condemnation in their own breast, no sense of guilt, or dread of the wrath of God. They 'have the witness in themselves': they are conscious of their interest in the blood of sprinkling. 'They have not received again the spirit of bondage unto fear,' unto doubt and racking uncertainty; but they 'have received the Spirit of adoption,' crying in their heart, 'Abba, Father.' Thus, being 'justified by faith,' they have the peace of God ruling in their hearts; flowing from a continual sense of His pardoning mercy, and 'the answer of a good conscience toward God.'

3. If it be said, 'But sometimes a believer in Christ may lose his sight of the mercy of God; sometimes such darkness may fall upon him that he no longer sees Him that is invisible, no longer feels that witness in himself of his part in the atoning blood, and then he is inwardly condemned, he hath again "the sentence of death in himself"' I answer, supposing it so

II. 1. The remission of the sins that are past—this phrase in Rom. iii. 25 has nothing to do with the past sins of the believer; it means the sins committed by the men who lived before the coming of Christ, and who had been forgiven because of His foreseen and pre-ordained sacrifice.

3. Wesley himself, as we have seen, passed through a long period of darkness after his conversion. More than six months after that experience, he writes in his *Journal* (January 4, 1739) that he has not the fruits of the Spirit; neither love, nor joy, nor peace; and over and over again he affirms, 'I am not a Christian.' In *Minutes*, June 25,

1744, he says: 'It is certain, a believer need never again come into condemnation. It seems he need not come into a state of doubt, or fear, or darkness; and that, ordinarily at least, he will not, unless by ignorance or unfaithfulness. Yet it is true that the first joy does seldom last long; that it is commonly followed by doubts and fears; and that God frequently permits great heaviness before any large manifestation of Himself.' He deals fully with the subject in Sermons XL and XLI; where he distinguishes between *darkness*, which is always caused by sin, or ignorance, or temptation; and *heaviness*, which may be due to bodily disorders, or calamity,

to be, supposing him not to see the mercy of God, then he is not a believer for faith implies light, the light of God shining upon the soul. So far, therefore, as any one loses this light, he, for the time, loses his faith. And, no doubt, a true believer in Christ may lose the light of faith; and so far as this is lost, he may, for a time, fall again into condemnation. But this is not the case of them who now 'are in Christ Jesus,' who now believe in His name. For so long as they believe, and walk after the Spirit, neither God condemns them, nor their own heart.

4. They are not condemned, secondly, for any present sins, for now transgressing the commandments of God. For they do not transgress them they do not 'walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' This is the continual proof of their 'love of God, that they keep His commandments', even as St. John bears witness, 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin. For His seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God' he cannot, so long as that seed of God, that loving, holy faith remaineth in him. So long as 'he keepeth himself' herein, 'that wicked one toucheth him not.' Now it is evident, he is not condemned for the sins which he doth not commit at all. They, therefore, who are thus 'led by the Spirit are not under the law' (Gal. v. 18)

or bereavement; but he will not allow that God ever withdraws Himself, merely of His own good pleasure, from the believer. Darkness implies that 'faith itself, if not totally lost, is, however, grievously decayed'; heaviness is consistent with 'a clear, unshaken confidence in God.' This is a modification of the statement in this paragraph that loss of light implies loss of faith.

4. 'That seed of God.' Dr. Findlay (*Fellowship in the Life Eternal*, p. 266) says: 'That seed of God dwelling in the believer in Christ is the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus sin is got rid of not by repression, but by pre-occupation. The man is possessed by another genera-

tive principle. The children of God can no more live in sin than the children of the devil out of it. To the Christian man sin becomes a moral impossibility.' But he adds, what Wesley did not always consider, 'There is obviously a certain idealism in the Apostle's sweeping assertions. His dictum in verse 9 applies in its absolute truth to the "perfect man" in Christ Jesus. Principle must be wrought into habit before it has full play and sway.' So my beloved Master, the Rev. Benjamin Hellier, in his Essay on Holiness (*Life*, p. 295, ss.) says: 'How can men be wholly spiritual and yet carnal? The explanation is found in the difference

not under the curse or condemnation of it ; for it condemns none but those who break it. Thus, that law of God, ' Thou shalt not steal,' condemns none but those who do steal. Thus, ' Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy,' condemns those only who do not keep it holy. But against the fruits of the Spirit ' there is no law ' (ver. 23) ; as the Apostle more largely declares in those memorable words of his former Epistle to Timothy : ' We know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully ; knowing this ' (if, while he uses the law of God, in order either to convince or direct, he know and remember this), *ὅτι δικαίῳ νόμος οὐ κείται*, (not ' that the law is not made for a righteous man,' but) ' that the law does not lie against a righteous man ' it has no force against him, no power to condemn him, ' but against the lawless and disobedient, against the ungodly and sinners, against the unholy and profane, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God ' (1 Tim. i. 8, 9, 11).

5. They are not condemned, thirdly, for inward sin, even though it does now remain. That the corruption of nature does still remain, even in those who are the children of God by faith ; that they have in them the seeds of pride and vanity, of anger, lust, and evil desire, yea, sin of every kind ; is too plain to be denied, being matter of daily experience. And on this account it is, that St. Paul, speaking to those whom he

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existing between the *ideal* and the *actual*.' But we are not to say that the Christian who has not yet attained the ideal is not a Christian at all. Wesley's disposition as a logician to divide the universe into A and not-A made him too solicitous to label every one as either Christian or not-Christian, and to limit the name Christian to the ideally perfect Christian. We do not refuse to classify Homer as a poet because he sometimes nods, and so falls below his own ideal. Westcott puts the matter from a slightly different point of view : ' The ideas of divine sonship and sin are mutually exclusive. As long

as the relationship with God is real, sinful acts are but accidents. They do not touch the essence of man's being.'

Wesley's emendation of the A.V. of 1 Tim. i. 9 cannot be sustained. The Greek word is in its classical sense ' is enacted '—' Law is not enacted for a righteous man.'

5. The corruption of nature does still remain ; or in more modern language, the appropriate stimuli still provoke response in the physical and psychical nature. But these thoughts are not sinful, unless and until they are indulged and dwelt upon. To quote Mr. Hellier once more (p. 308) : " We may have

had just before witnessed to be 'in Christ Jesus' (1 Cor. i. 2, 9), to have been 'called of God into the fellowship' (or participation) 'of His Son Jesus Christ'; yet declares, 'Brethren, I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ' (1 Cor. iii. 1): 'babes in Christ', so we see they were 'in Christ', they were believers in a low degree. And yet how much of sin remained in them! of that 'carnal mind, which is not subject to the law of God'!

6. And yet, for all this, they are not condemned. Although they feel the flesh, the evil nature, in them, although they are more sensible, day by day, that their 'heart is deceitful and desperately wicked', yet, so long as they do not yield thereto, so long as they give no place to the devil; so long as they maintain a continual war with all sin, with pride, anger, desire, so that the flesh hath not dominion over them, but they still 'walk after the Spirit', 'there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.' God is well pleased with their sincere, though imperfect obedience, and they 'have confidence toward God,' knowing they are His, 'by the Spirit which He hath given' them (1 John iii. 24).

7. Nay, fourthly, although they are continually convinced of sin cleaving to all they do, although they are conscious of not fulfilling the perfect law, either in their thoughts, or words, or works, although they know they do not love the Lord their God with all their heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, although they feel more or less of pride, or self-will, stealing in and mixing with their best duties, although even in their more immediate intercourse with God, when they assemble themselves with the great congregation, and when they pour out their souls in secret to Him who seeth all the thoughts and intents of the heart, they are continually ashamed of their

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passing through our minds a thousand thoughts about sin, and yet have not one sinful thought.' The great and good Dr. Johnson, in the *Rambler*, No. 8 (April 1750), says: 'Thoughts are only criminal when they are first chosen, and then volun-

tarily continued.' Or, as Milton says, *Paradise Lost* (v. 118):

Evil into the mind of God or man  
May come and go, so unapprov'd, and leave  
No spot or blame behind.

7. On the subject of this paragraph see Sermon XXXVI.

wandering thoughts, or of the deadness and dullness of their affections, yet there is no condemnation to them still, either from God or from their own heart. The consideration of these manifold defects only gives them a deeper sense, that they have always need of the blood of sprinkling which speaks for them in the ears of God, and that Advocate with the Father 'who ever liveth to make intercession for them.' So far are these from driving them away from Him in whom they have believed, that they rather drive them the closer to Him whom they feel the want of every moment. And, at the same time, the deeper sense they have of this want, the more earnest desire do they feel, and the more diligent they are, as they 'have received the Lord Jesus, so to walk in Him.'

8. They are not condemned, fifthly, for sins of infirmity, as they are usually called. Perhaps it were advisable rather to call them *infirmities*, that we may not seem to give any countenance to sin, or to extenuate it in any degree, by thus coupling it with infirmity. But (if we must retain so ambiguous and dangerous an expression), by sins of infirmity I would mean, such involuntary failings as the saying a thing we believe true, though, in fact, it prove to be false; or, the hurting our neighbour without knowing or designing it, perhaps when we designed to do him good. Though these are deviations from the holy, and acceptable, and perfect will of God, yet they are not properly sins, nor do they bring any guilt on the conscience of 'them which are in Christ Jesus.' They separate not between God and them, neither intercept the light of His countenance, as being no ways inconsistent with their general character of 'walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.'

9. Lastly. 'There is no condemnation' to them for anything whatever which it is not in their power to help; whether it be of an inward or outward nature, and whether it be doing something or leaving something undone. For instance, the

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8. Infirmities are not sins, any more than the acts or omissions mentioned in the next paragraph which it is not in our power to help. 'There is no guilt, because there is no choice.' And this principle

governs also the estimate of the so-called sins of surprise of par. 11. The sinfulness of any act is determined by the amount of concurrence of the will.



Lord's supper is to be administered, but you do not partake thereof. Why do you not? You are confined by sickness; therefore you cannot help omitting it; and for the same reason you are not condemned. There is no guilt, because there is no choice. As there 'is a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, not according to that he hath not.'

10. A believer, indeed, may sometimes be *grieved*, because he cannot do what his soul longs for. He may cry out when he is detained from worshipping God in the great congregation, 'Like as the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God: when shall I come to appear in the presence of God?' He may earnestly desire (only still saying in his heart, 'Not as I will, but as Thou wilt') to 'go again with the multitude, and bring them forth into the house of God.' But still, if he cannot go, he feels no condemnation, no guilt, no sense of God's displeasure; but can cheerfully yield up those desires with, 'O my soul, put thy trust in God! for I will yet give Him thanks, who is the help of my countenance and my God.'

11. It is more difficult to determine concerning those which are usually styled sins of surprise: as when one who commonly in patience possesses his soul, on a sudden and violent temptation, speaks or acts in a manner not consistent with the royal law, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' Perhaps it is not easy to fix a general rule concerning transgressions of this nature. We cannot say, either that men are, or that they are not, condemned for sins of surprise in general: but it seems, whenever a believer is by surprise overtaken in a fault, there is more or less condemnation, as there is more or less concurrence of his will. In proportion as a sinful desire, or word, or action is more or less voluntary, so we may conceive

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10. These reminiscences from the Prayer-Book version of Psa. xlii. are natural to a man who was using that version in the daily service. I have never ceased to regret the

pedantry which robbed the Methodist people of their heritage in this beautiful version by substituting for it in our service-book the Authorized rendering.

God is more or less displeased, and there is more or less guilt upon the soul.

12. But if so, then there may be some sins of surprise which bring much guilt and condemnation. For, in some instances, our being surprised is owing to some wilful and culpable neglect, or to a sleepiness of soul which might have been prevented, or shaken off before the temptation came. A man may be previously warned either of God or man, that trials and dangers are at hand, and yet may say in his heart, 'A little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to rest.' Now, if such an one afterwards fall, though unawares, into the snare which he might have avoided,—that he fell unawares is no excuse, he might have foreseen and have shunned the danger. The falling, even by surprise, in such an instance as this, is, in effect, a wilful sin, and, as such, must expose the sinner to condemnation, both from God and his own conscience.

13. On the other hand, there may be sudden assaults, either from the world, or the god of this world, and frequently from our own evil hearts, which we did not, and hardly could, foresee. And by these even a believer, while weak in faith, may possibly be borne down, suppose into a degree of anger, or thinking evil of another, with scarce any concurrence of his will. Now, in such a case, the jealous God would undoubtedly show him that he had done foolishly. He would be convinced of having swerved from the perfect law, from the mind which was in Christ, and consequently, *grieved* with a godly sorrow, and lovingly *ashamed* before God. Yet need he not come into condemnation. God layeth not folly to his charge, but hath compassion upon him, 'even as a father pitieth his own children.' And his heart condemneth him not: in the midst of that sorrow and shame he can still say, 'I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song, He also is become my salvation.'

III. 1. It remains only to draw some practical inferences from the preceding considerations.

And, first, if there be 'no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,' and 'walk not after the flesh, but after the

Spirit,' on account of their past sin, then why art thou fearful, O thou of little faith? Though thy sins were once more in number than the sand, what is that to thee, now thou art in Christ Jesus? 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth who is he that condemneth?' All the sins thou hast committed from thy youth up, until the hour when thou wast 'accepted in the Beloved,' are driven away as chaff, are gone, are lost, swallowed up, remembered no more. Thou art now 'born of the Spirit': wilt thou be troubled or afraid of what is done before thou wert born? Away with thy fears! Thou art not called to fear, but to the 'spirit of love and of a sound mind.' ~~Know~~ thy calling! Rejoice in God thy Saviour, and give thanks to God thy Father through Him.

2. Wilt thou say, 'But I have again committed sin, since I had redemption through His blood? And therefore it is, that "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."' It is meet thou shouldest abhor thyself, and it is God who hath wrought thee to this self-same thing. But, dost thou now believe? Hath He again enabled thee to say, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth', 'and the life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God'? Then that faith again cancels all that is past, and there is no condemnation to thee. At what-soever time thou truly believest in the name of the Son of God, all thy sins, antecedent to that hour, vanish away as the morning dew. Now then, 'stand thou fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made thee free.' He hath once more made thee free from the power of sin, as well as from the guilt and punishment of it. O 'be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage!'—neither the vile, devilish bondage of sin, of evil desires, evil tempers, or words, or works, the most grievous yoke on this side hell, nor the bondage of slavish, tormenting fear, of guilt and self-condemnation.

3. But secondly, do all they which abide 'in Christ Jesus, walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit'? Then we cannot but infer, that whosoever now committeth sin, hath no part or lot in this matter. He is even now condemned by his

own heart. But, 'if our heart condemn us,' if our own conscience beareth witness that we are guilty, undoubtedly God doth; for 'He is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things'; so that we cannot deceive Him, if we can ourselves. And think not to say, 'I was justified once, my sins were once forgiven me': I know not that, neither will I dispute whether they were or no. Perhaps at this distance of time, it is next to impossible to know, with any tolerable degree of certainty, whether that was a true, genuine work of God, or whether thou didst only deceive thy own soul. But this I know, with the utmost degree of certainty, 'he that committeth sin is of the devil.' Therefore, thou art of thy father the devil. It cannot be denied for the works of thy father thou doest. O flatter not thyself with vain hopes! Say not to thy soul, 'Peace, peace'! For there is no peace. Cry aloud! Cry unto God out of the deep, if haply He may hear thy voice. Come unto Him as at first, as wretched and poor, as sinful, miserable, blind and naked! And beware thou suffer thy soul to take no rest, till His pardoning love be again revealed, till He 'heal thy backslidings,' and fill thee again with the 'faith that worketh by love.'

4. Thirdly. Is there no condemnation to them which 'walk after the Spirit,' by reason of *inward sin* still remaining, so long as they do not give way thereto, nor by reason of *sin cleaving* to all they do? Then fret not thyself because of ungodliness, though it still remain in thy heart. Repine not, because thou still comest short of the glorious image of God, nor yet because pride, self-will, or unbelief, cleave to all thy words and works. And be not afraid to know all this evil of thy heart, to know thyself as also thou art known. Yea, desire of God, that thou mayest not think of thyself more highly than thou oughtest to think. Let thy continual prayer be,

Show me, as my soul can bear,  
The depth of inbred sin;  
All the unbelief declare,  
The pride that lurks within.

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4. The quotation is from Charles Wesley's hymn, entitled 'Waiting for Christ the Prophet,' in *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, 1742. It is Hymn

But when He heareth thy prayer, and unveils thy heart, when He shows thee thoroughly what spirit thou art of; then beware that thy faith fail thee not, that thou suffer not thy shield to be torn from thee. Be abased. Be humbled in the dust. See thyself nothing, less than nothing, and vanity. But still, 'let not thy heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.' Still hold fast, 'I, even I, have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' 'And as the heavens are higher than the earth, so is His love higher than even my sins.' Therefore God is merciful to thee a sinner! such a sinner as thou art! God is love, and Christ hath died! Therefore the Father Himself loveth thee! Thou art His child! Therefore He will withhold from thee no manner of thing that is good. Is it good, that the whole body of sin, which is now crucified in thee, should be destroyed? It shall be done! Thou shalt be 'cleansed from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit.' Is it good, that nothing should remain in thy heart but the pure love of God alone? Be of good cheer! 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and mind, and soul, and strength.' 'Faithful is He that hath promised, who also will do it.' It is thy part, patiently to continue in the work of faith, and in the labour of love; and in cheerful peace, in humble confidence, with calm and resigned and yet earnest expectation, to wait till the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall perform this.

5. Fourthly. If they that 'are in Christ,' and 'walk after the Spirit,' are not condemned for *sins of infirmity*, as neither for *involuntary failings*, nor for anything whatever which they are not able to help, then beware, O thou that hast faith in His blood, that Satan herein gain no advantage over thee. Thou art still foolish and weak, blind and ignorant; more weak than any words can express, more foolish than it can yet enter into thy heart to conceive, knowing

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424 in the Methodist Hymn-Book, but there the first verse, 'Christ my hidden life appear,' is omitted. These lines are the first four of verse 5 (now 4).

What a glowing, tender, sympathetic, and faithful thing is this whole application! Note the personal touch—Thou, thee.

nothing yet as thou oughtest to know. Yet, let not all thy weakness and folly, or any fruit thereof, which thou art not yet able to avoid, shake thy faith, thy filial trust in God, or disturb thy peace or joy in the Lord. The rule which some give, as to wilful sins, and which, in that case, may perhaps be dangerous, is undoubtedly wise and safe if it be applied only to the case of weakness and infirmities. Art thou fallen, O man of God? Yet, do not lie there, fretting thyself and bemoaning thy weakness, but meekly say, 'Lord, I shall fall thus every moment, unless Thou uphold me with Thy hand.' And then arise! Leap and walk! Go on thy way! 'Run with patience the race that is set before thee.'

6. Lastly. Since a believer need not come into condemnation, even though he be *surprised* into what his soul abhors (suppose his being surprised is not owing to any carelessness or wilful neglect of his own); if thou who believest art thus overtaken in a fault, then grieve unto the Lord: it shall be a precious balm. Pour out thy heart before Him, and show Him of thy trouble; and pray with all thy might to Him who is 'touched with the feeling of thy infirmities,' that He would establish, and strengthen, and settle thy soul, and suffer thee to fall no more. But still He condemneth thee not. Wherefore shouldest thou fear? Thou hast no need of any 'fear that hath torment.' Thou shalt love Him that loveth thee, and it sufficeth: more love will bring more strength. And, as soon as thou lovest Him with all thy heart, thou shalt be 'perfect and entire, lacking nothing.' Wait in peace for that hour, when 'the God of peace shall sanctify thee wholly, so that thy whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ'!

## SERMON IX

### THE SPIRIT OF BONDAGE AND OF ADOPTION

IN the *Journal* for Sunday, October 7, 1739, Wesley says, 'A few, I trust, out of two or three thousand were awakened by the explanation of those words: "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage," &c.' This was at Gloucester, and the service was held at seven in the morning. On April 25 of the same year he records: 'To above two thousand at Baptist Mills (Bristol) I explained that glorious scripture, describing the state of every true believer in Christ—every who by faith is born of God—"Ye have not received," &c.' This service was held at four in the afternoon. He preached it again at Bristol at 7.30 a.m. on March 10, 1741; from his father's tombstone at Epworth, June 10, 1742; and on September 17, 1743, at Morvah 'to the largest congregation I have seen in Cornwall.'

The distinction, which is the essence of this sermon, between the natural man, the awakened sinner, and the believer, is a sound and useful one; especially when the concession in iv. 2, that these states may sometimes not be mutually exclusive, is borne in mind. But it is doubtful whether St. Paul meant by 'a spirit of bondage' the temper of the convicted man; it rather refers to the condition of a Jew under the law, and of a Gentile under the sway of superstition, in contrast with the liberty of the Christian. The earnest Jew or heathen hopes to be saved by obedience to certain laws, precepts, and observances; he is a slave to these, and is constantly in fear lest he should have failed to keep them. The Pharisee, striving anxiously to observe every point in the thousand and one precepts of the Mishnah, and the savage of New Britain, hedged about at every moment of his life by tabus and the dread of witchcraft, are equally slaves, and live in constant fear of offending. This is the spirit of bondage tending to fear to which St. Paul refers; but it is perhaps justifiable to apply the phrase to the convicted sinner, who is certainly an example of the spirit, though not the only one.

*Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again unto fear ; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.—*  
ROM. viii. 15.

1. ST. PAUL here speaks to those who are the children of God by faith. 'Ye,' saith he, who are indeed His children, have drank into His Spirit, 'ye have not received the spirit of bondage again unto fear', but, 'because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts.' 'Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.'

2. The spirit of bondage and fear is widely distant from this loving Spirit of adoption : those who are influenced only by slavish fear cannot be termed 'the sons of God'; yet some of them may be styled His servants, and are 'not far from the kingdom of heaven.'

3. But it is to be feared, the bulk of mankind, yea, of what

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Par. 2. At first Wesley was disposed to deny that any one who had not received the spirit of adoption was a Christian. But he found it more and more impossible to maintain this position. As early as 1746, in *Minutes*, May 13, Q. 11, he defines a 'Jew inwardly' as 'a servant of God; one who sincerely obeys Him out of fear; whereas a Christian inwardly is a child of God; one who sincerely obeys Him out of love.' In his own note on the concluding portion of his sixth Savannah Journal, in which he speaks of his not having been converted to God up to that time (1738), he says, 'I had even then the faith of a *servant*, though not that of a *son*.' In Sermon CVI, on Faith, i. 11, he says: 'Nearly fifty years ago, when the Preachers, commonly called Methodists, began to preach that grand scriptural doctrine, salvation by faith, they were not sufficiently apprised of the difference between a servant and a child of

God. They did not clearly understand that every one "who feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him." And in Sermon CX, on The Discoveries of Faith, written at Yarm in 1788, par. 13, he says, 'The faith of a servant implies a divine evidence of the invisible and the eternal world; yea, an evidence of the spiritual world, so far as it can exist without living experience. Whosoever has attained this, the faith of a servant, "feareth God and escheweth evil"; or, as it is expressed by St. Peter, "feareth God and worketh righteousness." In consequence of which he is, in a degree, as the Apostle observes, "accepted with Him." Every one who has gone thus far in religion, who obeys God out of fear is not in any wise to be despised; seeing "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Nevertheless, he should be exhorted not to stop there.'



is called the Christian world, have not attained even this, but are still afar off, 'neither is God in all their thoughts.' A few names may be found of those who love God; a few more there are that fear Him, but the greater part have neither the fear of God before their eyes, nor the love of God in their hearts.

4. Perhaps most of you, who, by the mercy of God, now partake of a better spirit, may remember the time when ye were as they, when ye were under the same condemnation. But at first ye knew it not, though ye were wallowing daily in your sins and in your blood, till, in due time, ye 'received the spirit of fear' (*ye received*, for this also is the gift of God); and afterwards, fear vanished away, and the Spirit of love filled your hearts.

5. One who is in the first state of mind, without fear or love, is in Scripture termed a 'natural man': one who is under the spirit of bondage and fear, is sometimes said to be 'under the law' (although that expression more frequently signifies one who is under the Jewish dispensation, or who thinks himself obliged to observe all the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish law) but one who has exchanged the spirit of fear for the Spirit of love is properly said to be 'under grace.'

4. 'This also is the gift of God.' The text will not carry the weight of this inference. Sanday and Headlam paraphrase the passage thus: 'When you were first baptized, and the communication of the Holy Spirit sealed your admission into the Christian fold, the energies which He imparted were surely not those of a slave.' Wesley recognizes the force of the aorist (*ye received*, not *ye have received*); but he is not justified in arguing that because we did not receive the spirit of bondage then, we or others did receive it at some other time.

5. 'The natural man.' This is the rather inadequate translation of the Greek *ἄνθρωπος ψυχικός*, the psychical man; i.e. the man in

whom the *πνεῦμα* is still dormant, and whose motives are those which arise from the desires of the flesh and the mind. See introduction to Sermon V. and note on Sermon VIII, i. 2. This 'psychic' man 'receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God' (1 Cor. ii. 14); our present body is a 'psychic' body (1 Cor. xv. 44), a body developed hand in hand with the psyche, and therefore adapted to fulfil its desires; our resurrection body will be a 'pneumatic' body, adapted to the needs and desires of the pneuma, or spirit. The wisdom of this world is 'earthly, psychic, devilish' (Jas. iii. 15). The mockers in Jude 19 are 'psychic, not having a pneuma.'

Now, because it highly imports us to know what spirit we are of, I shall endeavour to point out distinctly, first, the state of a 'natural man', secondly, that of one who is 'under the law', and, thirdly, of one who is 'under grace.'

I. 1. And, first, the state of a *natural man*. This the Scripture represents as a state of sleep: the voice of God to him is, 'Awake, thou that sleepest.' For his soul is in a deep sleep: his spiritual senses are not awake they discern neither spiritual good nor evil. The eyes of his understanding are closed, they are sealed together, and see not. Clouds and darkness continually rest upon them, for he lies in the valley of the shadow of death. Hence, having no inlets for the knowledge of spiritual things, all the avenues of his soul being shut up, he is in gross, stupid ignorance of whatever he is most

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I. 1. The natural man is spoken of inferentially as 'asleep' in Eph. v. 14 and 1 Thess. v. 6; but the commoner figure for him is that of death, especially in St. John's Gospel and first Epistle: he is 'dead in trespasses and sins' (Eph. ii. 5), he 'abideth in death' (1 John iii. 14). It is curious that Wesley should have preferred the weaker figure of sleep to the stronger and commoner one of death. The *pneuma* is actually dead until revived by the breath of the Spirit of God, the Giver of Life. But, as is suggested in par. iv. 2, no man is left without some measure of the prevenient grace of the Holy Spirit; otherwise he could never begin to stir with the faintest pulse of spiritual life.

St. Paul's use of the word *νοῦς*, understanding, requires some consideration. Sometimes he seems to make it almost equivalent to *pneuma*; as in Rom. vii. 25, 'With my *nous* I serve the law of God, but with my *sarx* the law of sin'; 1 Cor. ii. 16, 'we have the *nous* of Christ,' which is much the same thing as 'the spirit

(*pneuma*) of Christ.' More often it seems to be a function of the 'natural man'; it needs renewal (Rom. xii. 2; Eph. iv. 23); the Gentiles walk in the 'vanity of their *nous*' (Eph. iv. 17); and are described as 'corrupted in their *nous*' (1 Tim. vi. 6; 2 Tim. iii. 8); indeed, in Col. ii. 18 we read of men 'puffed up by the *nous* of the *sarx*.' The solution of the puzzle is that *nous* is a function of the *psyche*; it is the intellectual part of the natural man, and through it he is able to reason and apprehend truth; a man need not be converted in order to be a great mathematician or scientist. But it is also a function of the *pneuma*, though subordinate to it; we are to pray with the *pneuma* and with the *nous* also (1 Cor. xiv. 15). The inspiration of the Spirit does not supersede or invalidate the processes of reason. So that it is hardly correct to say that in the natural man 'the eyes of his understanding are closed,' &c. This is true of spiritual things, but not of all objects of thought.

concerned to know. He is utterly ignorant of God, knowing nothing concerning Him as he ought to know. He is totally a stranger to the law of God, as to its true, inward, spiritual meaning. He has no conception of that evangelical holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord, nor of the happiness which they only find whose 'life is hid with Christ in God.'

2. And, for this very reason, because he is fast asleep, he is, in some sense, at rest. Because he is blind, he is also secure: he saith, 'Tush, there shall no harm happen unto me.' The darkness which covers him on every side, keeps him in a kind of peace, so far as peace can consist with the works of the devil, and with an earthly, devilish mind. He sees not that he stands on the edge of the pit; therefore he *fears* it not. He cannot *tremble* at the danger he does not *know*. He has not understanding enough to fear. Why is it that he is in no dread of God? Because he is totally ignorant of Him if not saying in his heart, 'There is no God', or, that 'He sitteth on the circle of the heavens, and humbleth' not 'Himself to behold the things which are done on earth', yet satisfying himself as well, to all Epicurean intents and purposes, by saying, 'God is merciful'; confounding and swallowing up all at once in that unwieldy idea of mercy all His holiness and essential hatred of sin, all His justice, wisdom, and truth. He is in no dread of the vengeance denounced against those who obey not the blessed law of God, because he understands it not. He imagines the main point is, to *do hus*, to be *outwardly* blameless; and sees not that it extends to every temper, desire, thought, motion of the heart. Or he fancies that the obligation hereto is ceased, that Christ came to 'destroy the Law and the Prophets'; to save His people

I. 2. 'Secure'; that is, according to the old and more correct meaning of the word, 'free from care or anxiety,' not 'safe.'

"Epicurean": the word had come to be used generally in the sense of pleasure-loving, self-indulgent, and even 'luxurious'; which was hardly just to Epicurus, who, though he taught that pleasure was the highest

good, nevertheless thought that the highest form of pleasure was to be found in plain living and high thinking. Probably Wesley used the word here with some reference to the teaching of Epicurus that 'God does nothing, is not involved in any occupations, performs no toil, rejoices in His own wisdom and virtue' (Cic. *De Nat. Deorum*, i. 19).

*in*, not *from*, their sins; to bring them to heaven without holiness—notwithstanding His own words, ‘Not one jot or tittle of the law shall pass away,’ till all things are fulfilled’; and, ‘Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord! shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven.’

3. He is secure, because he is utterly ignorant of himself. Hence he talks of ‘repenting by-and-by’, he does not indeed exactly know when, but some time or other before he dies; taking it for granted, that this is quite in his own power. For what should hinder his doing it, if he will? If he does but once set a resolution, no fear but he will make it good!

4. But this ignorance never so strongly glares, as in those who are termed *men of learning*. If a natural man be one of these, he can talk at large of his rational faculties, of the freedom of his will, and the absolute necessity of such freedom, in order to constitute man a moral agent. He reads, and argues, and proves to a demonstration, that every man

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4. Wesley sets forth very clearly his view on Freewill in *Predestination Calmly Considered* (1752), par. 45, ss. After quoting from the Westminster Confession, chap. ix. ‘God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty that is neither forced nor, by an absolute necessity of nature, determined to do good or evil’; he says, ‘I do not carry free-will so far; I mean, not in moral things; natural free-will in the present state of mankind, I do not understand; I only assert that there is a measure of free-will supernaturally restored to every man, together with that supernatural light which “enlightens every man that cometh into the world.”’ He accepts the teaching of Article X of the Church of England: ‘The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good

works to faith and calling upon God. Wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will.’ In a letter to John Mason, November 21, 1776, he speaks of the Calvinistic supposition ‘that a natural man is “as dead as a stone” as utterly false and absurd; “seeing no man living is without some preventing grace; and every degree of grace is a degree of life.” In other words, the natural man does not exist *in rerum natura*, any more than the ‘almost Christian’ described in Sermon II. He is merely a museum specimen, constructed *a priori*; he is conceivable (as a stone without weight is conceivable, and may be used in the hypothesis of a mathematical problem); but you can never find him.

may do as he will, may dispose his own heart to evil or good, as it seems best in his own eyes. Thus the god of this world spreads a double veil of blindness over his heart, lest, by any means, 'the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine' upon it.

5. From the same ignorance of himself and God, there may sometimes arise, in the natural man, a kind of *joy*, in congratulating himself upon his own wisdom and goodness; and what the world calls joy he may often possess. He may have pleasure in various kinds; either in gratifying the desires of the flesh, or the desire of the eye, or the pride of life, particularly if he has large possessions; if he enjoy an affluent fortune; then he may 'clothe' himself 'in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day.' And so long as he thus doeth well unto himself, men will doubtless speak good of him. They will say, 'He is a happy man.' For, indeed, this is the sum of worldly happiness; to dress, and visit, and talk, and eat, and drink, and rise up to play.

6. It is not surprising, if one in such circumstances as these, dosed with the opiates of flattery and sin, should imagine, among his other waking dreams, that he walks in great *liberty*. How easily may he persuade himself, that he is at liberty from all *vulgar errors*, and from the *prejudice* of education, judging exactly right, and keeping clear of all extremes. 'I am free,' may he say, 'from all the *enthusiasm* of weak and narrow souls; from *superstition*, the disease of fools and cowards, always righteous over much, and from *bigotry*, continually incident to those who have not a free and generous way of thinking.' And too sure it is, that he is altogether free from the 'wisdom which cometh from above,' from holiness, from the religion of the heart, from the whole mind which was in Christ.

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5. This summary of worldly happiness might easily be illustrated from the satirical articles on fashionable life in the *Spectator* and the *Tatler* and the other periodical journals of the time; but it is not

exhaustive. A man may find the chief pleasure of his life in music, or art, or literature, or scientific inquiry, and yet be entirely devoid of religion.

7. For all this time he is the servant of sin. He commits sin, more or less, day by day. Yet he is not troubled : he ' is in no bondage,' as some speak ; he feels no condemnation. He contents himself (even though he should profess to believe that the Christian Revelation is of God) with, ' Man is frail. We are all weak. Every man has his infirmity.' Perhaps he quotes Scripture : ' Why, does not Solomon say, The righteous man falls into sin seven times a day? And, doubtless, they are all hypocrites or enthusiasts who pretend to be better than their neighbours.' If, at any time, a serious thought fix upon him, he stifles it as soon as possible, with, ' Why should I fear, since God is merciful, and Christ died for sinners? ' Thus, he remains a willing servant of sin, content with the bondage of corruption, inwardly and outwardly unholy, and satisfied therewith, not only not conquering sin, but not striving to conquer, particularly that sin which doth so easily beset him.

8. Such is the state of every *natural man* ; whether he be a gross, scandalous transgressor, or a more reputable and decent sinner, having the form, though not the power, of godliness. But how can such an one be *convinced of sin*? How is he brought to *repent*, to be *under the law*, to receive the *spirit of bondage unto fear*? This is the point which is next to be considered.

II. 1. By some awful providence, or by His word applied with the demonstration of His Spirit, God touches the heart of him that lay asleep in darkness and in the shadow of death. He is terribly shaken out of his sleep, and awakes into a consciousness of his danger. Perhaps in a moment, perhaps by degrees, the eyes of his understanding are opened, and now first (the veil being in part removed) discern the real

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7. The natural man is made, probably with intention, to quote Solomon incorrectly. What is said in Prov. xxiv. 16, is, ' A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again,' the reference being not to sin, but to misfortune.

II. 1. Wesley was thinking of Milton's description of the light of hell (*Par. Lost*, i. 62) :

A dungeon horrible on all sides round  
As one great furnace flam'd; yet from those  
flames  
No light, but rather darkness visible  
Serv'd only to discover sights of woe.

state he is in. Horrid light breaks in upon his soul ; such light as may be conceived to gleam from the bottomless pit, from the lowest deep, from a lake of fire burning with brimstone. He at last sees the loving, the merciful God is also 'a consuming fire', that He is a just God and a terrible, rendering to every man according to his works, entering into judgement with the ungodly for every idle word, yea, and for the imaginations of the heart. He now clearly perceives, that the great and holy God is 'of purer eyes than to behold iniquity'; that He is an avenger of every one who rebelleth against Him, and repayeth the wicked to his face; and that 'it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'

2. The inward, spiritual meaning of the law of God now begins to glare upon him. He perceives 'the commandment is exceeding broad,' and there is 'nothing hid from the light thereof.' He is convinced, that every part of it relates, not barely to outward sin or obedience, but to what passes in the secret recesses of the soul, which no eye but God's can penetrate. If he now hears, 'Thou shalt not kill,' God speaks in thunder, 'He that hateth his brother is a murderer'; 'He that saith unto his brother, Thou fool, is obnoxious to hell-fire.' If the law say, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery,' the voice of the Lord sounds in his ears, 'He that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.' And thus, in every point, he feels the Word of God 'quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword.' It 'pierces even to the dividing asunder of his soul and spirit, his joints and marrow.' And so much the more, because he is conscious to himself of having neglected so great salvation; of having 'trodden under foot the Son of God,' who would have saved him from his sins, and 'counted

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2. 'Obnoxious to': in the old sense of the word, liable to.

'Trodden under foot the Son of God.' This passage (Heb. x. 29) is wrongly applied here to the awakened sinner; it refers to those

who sin wilfully after they have received the knowledge of the truth; and specifically to those converts from Judaism to Christianity who have apostatized.

the blood of the covenant an unholy,' a common, unsanctifying 'thing.'

3. And as he knows, 'all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do,' so he sees himself naked, stripped of all the fig-leaves which he had sewed together, of all his poor pretences to religion or virtue, and his wretched excuses for sinning against God. He now sees himself, like the ancient sacrifices, *τετραχηνλισμένον*, *cleft in sunder*, as it were, from the neck downward, so that all within him stands confessed. His heart is bare, and he sees it is all sin, 'deceitful above all things, desperately wicked'; that it is altogether corrupt and abominable, more than it is possible for tongue to express, that there dwelleth therein no good thing, but unrighteousness and ungodliness only, every motion thereof, every temper and thought, being only evil continually.

4. And he not only sees, but feels in himself, by an emotion of soul which he cannot describe, that for the sins of his heart, were his life without blame (which yet it is not, and cannot be; seeing 'an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit'), he deserves to be cast into the fire that never shall be quenched. He feels that 'the wages,' the just reward, 'of sin,' of his sin above all, 'is death', even the second death, the death which dieth not, the destruction of body and soul in hell.

5. Here ends his pleasing dream, his delusive rest, his false peace, his vain security. His joy now vanishes as a cloud, pleasures, once loved, delight no more. They pall upon the taste he loathes the nauseous sweet, he is weary to bear

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3. 'Cleft in sunder,' &c. This is Chrysostom's interpretation of this difficult word. Others, following Philo's usage, take it to mean 'laid prostrate'; others again 'with the neck exposed by the throwing back of the head.' Wesley misses an important point in the passage (Heb. iv. 12), which bears directly on the distinction he draws between the natural and the spiritual man: 'The word of God cleaves through, even to the severance of psyche and

pneuma'; i.e., as Dr. Edwards paraphrases it, 'Revelation has separated between the life of heathenism and the life of the Church, between the natural man and the spiritual, between the darkness that comprehended it not, and the children of light who received it and thus became children of God.'

5. 'The nauseous sweet.' Doubtless a reference to the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.



them. The shadows of happiness flee away, and sink into oblivion: so that he is stripped of all, and wanders to and fro, seeking rest, but finding none.

6. The fumes of those opiates being now dispelled, he feels the anguish of a wounded spirit. He finds that sin let loose upon the soul (whether it be pride, anger, or evil desire, whether self-will, malice, envy, revenge, or any other) is perfect misery: he feels sorrow of heart for the blessings he has lost, and the curse which is come upon him, remorse for having thus destroyed himself, and despised his own mercies, fear, from a lively sense of the wrath of God, and of the consequences of His wrath, of the punishment which He has justly deserved, and which he sees hanging over his head; fear of death, as being to him the gate of hell, the entrance of death eternal; fear of the devil, the executioner of the wrath and righteous vengeance of God; fear of men, who, if they were able to kill his body, would thereby plunge both body and soul into hell,—fear, sometimes arising to such a height, that the poor, sinful, guilty soul is terrified with everything, with nothing, with shades, with a leaf shaken of the wind. Yea, sometimes it may even border upon distraction, making a man ‘drunken though not with wine,’ suspending the exercise of the memory, of the understanding, of all the natural faculties. Sometimes it may approach to the very brink of despair, so that he who trembles at the name of death, may yet be ready to plunge into it every moment, to ‘choose strangling rather than life.’ Well may such a man roar, like him of old, for the very disquietness of his heart. Well may he cry out, ‘The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmities, but a wounded spirit who can bear?’

7. Now he truly desires to break loose from sin, and begins to struggle with it. But though he strive with all his might, he cannot conquer: sin is mightier than he. He would fain escape, but he is so fast in prison, that he cannot get forth. He resolves against sin, but yet sins on: he sees the snare, and abhors and runs into it. So much does his boasted reason avail—only to enhance his guilt, and increase his misery! Such is the freedom of his will, free only to evil,

free to 'drink in iniquity like water', to wander farther and farther from the living God, and do more 'despite to the Spirit of grace.'

8. The more he strives, wishes, labours to be free, the more does he feel his chains, the grievous chains of sin, wherewith Satan binds and 'leads him captive at his will', his servant he is, though he repine ever so much, though he rebel, he cannot prevail. He is still in bondage and fear, by reason of sin generally, of some outward sin, to which he is peculiarly disposed, either by nature, custom, or outward circumstances, but always, of some inward sin, some evil temper or unholy affection. And the more he frets against it the more it prevails, he may bite, but cannot break his chain. Thus he toils without end, repenting and sinning, and repenting and sinning again, till at length the poor, sinful, helpless wretch is even at his wit's end, and can barely groan, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'

9. This whole struggle of one who is 'under the law,' under the 'spirit of fear and bondage,' is beautifully described by the Apostle in the foregoing chapter, speaking in the person of an awakened man. 'I,' saith he, 'was alive without the law once' (verse 9) I had much life, wisdom, strength, and virtue; so I thought 'but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died' when the commandment, in its spiritual meaning, came to my heart, with the power of God, my inbred sin was stirred up, fretted, inflamed, and all my virtue died away. 'And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me' (verses 10, 11): it came upon me unawares; slew all my hopes, and plainly showed, in the midst of life I was in death. 'Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good' (verse 12): I no longer lay the blame on this, but on the corruption of my own heart. I acknowledge that 'the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin' (verse 14): I now see both the spiritual nature of the law, and my own carnal, devilish heart 'sold under

sin,' totally enslaved (like slaves bought with money, who were absolutely at their master's disposal) : ' for that which I do, I allow not, for what I would, I do not, but what I hate, that I do ' (verse 15) : such is the bondage under which I groan, such the tyranny of my hard master. ' To will is present with me ; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would, I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do ' (verses 18, 19) ' I find a law,' an inward constraining power, ' that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in,' or consent to, ' the law of God, after the inward man ' (verses 21, 22) : in my ' mind ' (so the Apostle explains himself in the words that immediately follow, and so *ὁ ἔσω ἄνθρωπος*, the inward man, is understood in all other Greek writers) ' but I see another law in my members,' another constraining power, ' warring against the law of my mind,' or inward man, ' and bringing me into captivity to the law ' or power ' of sin ' (verse 23) : dragging me, as it were, at my conqueror's chariot-wheels, into the very thing which my soul abhors. ' O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? ' (verse 24). Who shall deliver me from this helpless, dying life, from this bondage of sin and misery ? Till this is done, ' I myself ' (or rather, *that I*, *αὐτὸς ἐγώ*, that man I am now personating) ' with the mind,' or inward

9. ' All other Greek writers.' Plato, *Rep.* ix. 589 A, says: ' Actions and words ought to be such as will enable the inward man (*ὁ ἐνὸς ἄνθρωπος*) to have the firmest control over the entire man ' ; and later: ' The practices which are held to be fair or foul, are fair or foul according as they either subjugate the brutal parts of our nature to the man, perhaps I should rather say, to the divine part—or make the tame part the servant and slave of the wild.' Similarly in *Rep.* iv. 439 D, he says: ' Then we shall have reasonable grounds for assuming that these are two principles distinct one from

the other, and for giving to that part of the soul with which it reasons the title of the rational principle, and to that part with which it loves and hungers and thirsts, and experiences the flutter of the other desires, the title of the irrational and concupiscent principle, the ally of sundry indulgences and pleasures.' Philo says there is a man in man, a better in a worse, an immortal in a mortal ; Plotinus, *Ennead*, I. i. 10, says, ' The body is animal, made like the beasts ; the true man is quite other.'

' That man I am now personating.' The Greek will not bear this

man, 'serve the law of God'; my mind, my conscience, is on God's side: 'but with my flesh,' with my body, 'the law of sin' (verse 25), being hurried away by a force I cannot resist.

10. How lively a portraiture is this of one 'under the law'! one who feels the burden he cannot shake off, who pants after liberty, power, and love, but is in fear and bondage still! until the time that God answers the wretched man, crying out, 'Who shall deliver me' from this bondage of sin, from this body of death?—'The grace of God through Jesus Christ thy Lord.'

III. 1. Then it is that this miserable bondage ends, and he is no more 'under the law, but under grace.' This state we are, thirdly, to consider; the state of one who has found *grace* or favour in the sight of God, even the Father, and who has the *grace* or power of the Holy Ghost reigning in his heart;

translation; it means not 'that I,' but 'I myself,' i.e. the inward man. The note on this passage in Sanday and Headlam is in close agreement with Wesley's general interpretation of the chapter, 'Three steps appear to be distinguished: (1) the life of unconscious morality, happy, but only from ignorance and thoughtlessness; (2) then the sharp collision between law and the sinful appetites waking to activity; (3) the end which is at last put to the stress and strain of this collision by the intervention of Christ and the Spirit of Christ.'

10. We may compare with Wesley's description of the state of mind of the convicted sinner the account of it by Starbuck (*Psychology of Religion*): 'There are many shades of experience in this pre-conversion state. An attempt at a classification of them gave these not very different groups: conviction for sin proper, struggle after the new life; prayer, calling upon God; sense of estrangement from God; doubts

and questionings; tendency to resist conviction; depression and sadness; restlessness, anxiety, and uncertainty; helplessness and humility; earnestness and seriousness; and various bodily affections.

The central fact in all [is] the sense of sin, while the other conditions are various manifestations of this.' It is most necessary to remember that genuine conviction of sin does not in every case involve the extreme experiences described in Wesley's picture. I speak feelingly, for I suffered for some months from a doubt of the reality of my own conversion, because I had not had any such poignant agonies of soul as I had heard preachers associate with true repentance. A sentence of Henry Ward Beecher's, which I cannot now identify exactly, saved me from despair; it was to the effect that if repentance had been deep enough to lead the sinner to forsake his sins and seek mercy, nothing more was necessary.

who has received, in the language of the Apostle, the ' Spirit of adoption, whereby ' he now cries, ' Abba, Father ! '

2. ' He cried unto the Lord in his trouble, and God delivers him out of his distress.' His eyes are opened in quite another manner than before, even to see a loving, gracious God. While he is calling, ' I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory ! '—he hears a voice in his inmost soul, ' I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy.' And it is not long before ' the Lord descends in the cloud, and proclaims the name of the Lord.' Then he sees, but not with eyes of flesh and blood, ' The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth ; keeping mercy for thousands, and forgiving iniquities, and transgressions, and sin.'

3. Heavenly, healing light now breaks in upon his soul. He ' looks on Him whom he had pierced ', and ' God, who out of darkness commanded light to shine, shineth in his heart.' He sees the light of the glorious love of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. He hath a divine ' evidence of things not seen ' by sense, even of ' the deep things of God ', more particularly of the love of God, of His pardoning love to him that believes in Jesus. Overpowered with the sight, his whole soul cries out, ' My Lord, and my God ! ' For he sees all his iniquities laid on Him who ' bare them in His own body on the tree ' he beholds the Lamb of God taking away his sins. How clearly now does he discern, that ' God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, making Him sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God through Him ', and that he himself is reconciled to God, by that blood of the covenant !

4. Here end both the guilt and power of sin. He can now say, ' I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh ' (even in this mortal body), ' I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.' Here end remorse, and sorrow of heart, and the anguish of a wounded

spirit. 'God turneth his heaviness into joy.' He made sore, and now His hands bind up. Here ends also that bondage unto fear; for 'his heart standeth fast, believing in the Lord.' He cannot fear any longer the wrath of God; for he knows it is now turned away from him, and looks upon Him no more as an angry Judge, but as a loving Father. He cannot fear the devil, knowing he has 'no power, except it be given him from above.' He fears not hell, being an heir of the kingdom of heaven: consequently, he has no fear of death, by reason whereof he was in time past, for so many years, 'subject to bondage.' Rather, knowing that 'if the earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, he hath a building of God—a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, he groaneth earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with that house which is from heaven.' He groans to shake off this house of earth, that 'mortality' may be 'swallowed up of life'; knowing that God 'hath wrought him for the selfsame thing, who hath also given him the earnest of His Spirit.'

5. And 'where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty'; liberty, not only from guilt and fear, but from sin, from that heaviest of all yokes, that basest of all bondage. His labour is not now in vain. The snare is broken, and he is delivered. He not only strives, but likewise prevails, he not only fights, but conquers also. 'Henceforth he does not serve sin' (chap. vi. 6, &c.). He is 'dead unto sin, and alive unto God'; 'sin doth not now reign,' even 'in his mortal body,' nor doth he 'obey it in the desires thereof.' He does not 'yield his members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but as instruments of righteousness unto God.' For 'being now made free from sin, he is become the servant of righteousness.'

6. Thus 'having peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,' 'rejoicing in hope of the glory of God,' and having power over all sin, over every evil desire, and temper, and word, and work, he is a living witness of the 'glorious liberty of the sons of God', all of whom, being partakers of like precious faith, bear record with one voice, 'We have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father!'

7. It is this Spirit which continually 'worketh in them,

both to will and to do of His good pleasure.' It is He that sheds the love of God abroad in their hearts, and the love of all mankind ; thereby purifying their hearts from the love of the world, from the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. It is by Him they are delivered from anger and pride, from all vile and inordinate affections. In consequence, they are delivered from evil words and works, from all unholiness of conversation , doing no evil to any child of man, and being zealous of all good works.

8. To sum up all : the *natural* man neither fears nor loves God, one *under the law* fears, one *under grace* loves Him. The first has no light in the things of God, but walks in utter darkness , the second sees the painful light of hell ; the third, the joyous light of heaven. He that sleeps in death has a false peace , he that is awakened has no peace at all ; he that believes has true peace,—the peace of God filling and ruling his heart. The Heathen, baptized or unbaptized, hath a fancied liberty, which is indeed licentiousness , the Jew, or one under the Jewish dispensation, is in heavy, grievous bondage ; the Christian enjoys the true glorious liberty of the sons of God. An unawakened child of the devil sins willingly ; one that is awakened sins unwillingly , a child of God 'sinneth not,' but 'keepeth himself, and the wicked one toucheth him not.' To conclude the natural man neither conquers nor fights ; the man under the law fights with sin, but cannot conquer , the man under grace fights and conquers, yea, is more than conqueror through Him that loveth him.'

IV 1. From this plain account of the threefold state of man, the *natural*, the *legal*, and the *evangelical*, it appears that it is not sufficient to divide mankind into sincere and insincere. A man may be sincere in any of these states , not only when he has the ' Spirit of adoption,' but while he has the ' spirit of

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IV. 1. The discussion of Sincerity in the *Minutes*, May 13, 1746, Q. 12 ss., should be read in connexion with this paragraph ; especially the state-

ment that if an unbeliever 'persevere therein, God will infallibly give him faith.'

bondage unto fear'; yea, while he has neither this fear, nor love. For undoubtedly there may be sincere Heathens, as well as sincere Jews or Christians. This circumstance, then, does by no means prove that a man is in a state of acceptance with God.

'Examine yourselves, therefore,' not only whether ye are sincere, but 'whether ye be in the faith.' Examine narrowly (for it imports you much), what is the ruling principle in your soul? Is it the love of God? Is it the fear of God? Or is it neither one nor the other? Is it not rather the love of the world? the love of pleasure, or gain? of ease, or reputation? If so, you are not come so far as a Jew. You are but a Heathen still. Have you heaven in your heart? Have you the Spirit of adoption, ever crying, Abba, Father? Or do you cry unto God, as 'out of the belly of hell,' overwhelmed with sorrow and fear? Or are you a stranger to this whole affair, and cannot imagine what I mean? Heathen, pull off the mask! Thou hast never put on Christ! Stand barefaced! Look up to heaven; and own before Him that liveth for ever and ever, thou hast no part either among the sons or servants of God!

Whosoever thou art, Dost thou commit sin, or dost thou not? If thou dost, is it willingly or unwillingly? In either case, God hath told thee whose thou art 'He that committeth sin is of the devil.' If thou committest it willingly, thou art his faithful servant: he will not fail to reward thy labour. If unwillingly, still thou art his servant. God deliver thee out of his hands!

Art thou daily fighting against all sin? and daily more than conqueror? I acknowledge thee for a child of God. O stand fast in thy glorious liberty! Art thou fighting, but not conquering? striving for the mastery, but not able to attain? Then thou art not yet a believer in Christ; but follow on, and thou shalt know the Lord. Art thou not fighting at all, but leading an easy, indolent, fashionable life? O how hast thou dared to name the name of Christ, only to make it a reproach among the Heathen? Awake, thou sleeper! Call upon thy God, before the deep swallow thee up!



2. Perhaps one reason why so many think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, why they do not discern what state they are in, is, because these several states of soul are often mingled together, and in some measure meet in one and the same person. Thus experience shows, that the legal state, or state of fear, is frequently mixed with the natural; for few men are so fast asleep in sin, but they are sometimes more or less awakened. As the Spirit of God does not 'wait for the call of man,' so, at some times He *will* be heard. He puts them in fear, so that, for a season at least, the Heathen 'know themselves to be but men.' They feel the burden of sin, and earnestly desire to flee from the wrath to come. But not long: they seldom suffer the arrows of conviction to go deep into their souls; but quickly stifle the grace of God, and return to their wallowing in the mire.

In like manner, the evangelical state, or state of love, is frequently mixed with the legal. For few of those who have the spirit of bondage and fear remain always without hope. The wise and gracious God rarely suffers this, 'for He remembereth that we are but dust', and He willeth not that 'the flesh should fail before Him, or the spirit which He hath made.' Therefore at such times as He seeth good, He gives a dawning of light unto them that sit in darkness. He causes a part of His goodness to pass before them, and shows He is a 'God that heareth the prayer.' They see the promise, which is by faith in Christ Jesus, though it be yet afar off, and hereby they are encouraged to 'run with patience the race which is set before them.'

2. A most important paragraph, which saves the whole sermon from the sense of unreality and remoteness from experience which it otherwise gives. The descriptions of the natural, the legal, and the evangelical state are not descriptions of men, but of phases of experience rarely or never found in their purity. 'These several states of soul are often mingled together, and in some

measure meet in one and the same person.' O wise and practical teacher! The key to Wesley's apparent inconsistencies is this: he first worked out his theology by strict logical deduction from the Scriptures; and then he corrected his conclusions by the test of actual experience. His class-meetings were a laboratory in which he verified or modified his hypotheses.

3. Another reason why many deceive themselves, is, because they do not consider how far a man may go, and yet be in a natural, or, at best, a legal state. A man may be of a compassionate and a benevolent temper; he may be affable, courteous, generous, friendly, he may have some degree of meekness, patience, temperance, and of many other moral virtues. He may feel many desires of shaking off all vice, and of attaining higher degrees of virtue. He may abstain from much evil; perhaps from all that is grossly contrary to justice, mercy, or truth. He may do much good, may feed the hungry, clothe the naked, relieve the widow and fatherless. He may attend public worship, use prayer in private, read many books of devotion; and yet, for all this, he may be a mere natural man, knowing neither himself nor God, equally a stranger to the spirit of fear and to that of love, having neither repented, nor believed the gospel.

But suppose there were added to all this a deep conviction of sin, with much fear of the wrath of God; vehement desires to cast off every sin, and to fulfil all righteousness; frequent rejoicing in hope, and touches of love often glancing upon the soul; yet neither do these prove a man to be *under grace*, to have true, living, Christian faith, unless the Spirit of adoption abide in his heart, unless he can continually cry, 'Abba, Father!'

4. Beware, then, thou who art called by the name of Christ, that thou come not short of the mark of thy high calling. Beware thou rest not, either in a natural state, with too many that are accounted *good Christians*, or in a legal state, wherein those who are highly esteemed of men are generally content to live and die. Nay, but God hath prepared better things for thee, if thou follow on till thou attain. Thou art not called to fear and tremble, like devils; but to rejoice and love, like the angels of God. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.' Thou shalt 'rejoice evermore'; thou shalt 'pray without ceasing'; thou shalt 'in everything give thanks.' Thou shalt do the will of God on earth as it is done in heaven. O prove thou 'what is that good, and

acceptable, and perfect will of God ' ! Now present thyself ' a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God ' ! ' Whereunto thou hast already attained, hold fast, ' by ' reaching forth unto those things which are before ' , until ' the God of peace make thee perfect in every good work, working in thee that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ : to whom be glory for ever and ever ! Amen ! '

## SERMON X

### THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT

#### DISCOURSE I

THIS sermon would seem to have been written for the edition of 1746. In Sermon XLV (written and published in 1767), ii. 3, Wesley quotes from this sermon, and says, 'After *twenty years*' further consideration, I see no cause to retract any part of this.' I find no record of its having been preached until August 11, 1753, where it stands in the sermon list at the end of the Standard edition of the *Journal* against St. Gennys, along with Jas. i. 27. Wesley reached St. Gennys on Saturday evening, August 11, after preaching at Camelford at noon, and getting wet through in 'such a shower of rain as I never saw before in Europe.' On Sunday the 12th, 'I never saw so many people in this church; nor did I ever before speak so plainly to them. They hear; but when will they feel?' As no texts are set down in the list for August 12, I take it that the two put down for August 11 are those that he preached from on the Sunday. 'Rom. viii. 15, &c.' is set down as the subject of the morning exercise at the society meeting at Bristol on Tuesday, March 10, 1741. Mr. Curnock says of these morning exercises: 'For this duty he prayed and robed. Usually he went fasting. Returning to his rooms, he drank chocolate or tea, and at once proceeded to write in his journal, or in sermon form, or in a paper for use in society meetings, the substance of the exposition that morning given' (*Journal*, II. p. 354 n.). This note refers to the meetings at the Foundery, but doubtless those at Bristol were on the same lines. This was probably the first form of this sermon, which was elaborated and revised for the edition of 1746. It is rather a tractate than a sermon, and was intended for publication, not for pulpit delivery. But whilst it does not seem to have been often preached, the doctrine which it defends formed part of almost every sermon of Wesley's in these early years. For example, in Sermon I, ii. 4, it is specified as one of the privileges of salvation by faith; and in Sermon IV, i. 3, we are told that the Christian of the apostolic age 'rejoiced in that witness of God's Spirit with his spirit that he was a child of God.'

This great doctrine, the clear statement of which was one of the most important services rendered to the Church by Wesley, had been obscured by the Sacramentarian teaching of the Romish Church, and exaggerated by the Mystics. The Westminster Confession had allowed it to be an ordinary gift of the Spirit to the believer; but stated that he may have to 'wait long and contend with many difficulties before he be partaker of it.' On the other hand, it taught that assurance, when once attained, is indefectible. The Anglican Articles are vague; in Art. XVII it is said that those who through grace obey the calling of God 'be made sons of God by adoption'; but there is no reference to the direct witness of the Spirit. Bishop Pearson, however, in *Exposition of Creed*, Art. VIII, says, 'It is the office of the Holy Ghost to assure us of the adoption of sons. . . As, therefore, we are born again by the Spirit, and receive from Him our regeneration, so we are also assured by the Spirit of our adoption'; and this passage is quoted in proof thereof. It was not from his own Church, but from the Moravians, and especially from the teaching of Peter Böhler, that Wesley in the early part of 1738 learnt that one of the fruits of true faith in Christ was 'constant peace, arising from a sense of forgiveness.' 'I was quite amazed,' he says (*Journal*, May 24, 1738), 'and looked upon it as a new gospel.' Then on May 24 came the great experience of realized salvation; 'an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.' For more than six months, however, he suffered from doubt and frequent darkness; but when he was once fairly embarked on his evangelical mission, they disappeared and troubled him no more. On September 3, 1739, he was much encouraged by his mother's experience. At first she had been fearful that he had erred in this matter; she told him she had scarce heard such a thing mentioned as the having God's Spirit bearing witness with our spirit; and she had never dared to ask it for herself. But two or three weeks before this conversation, as she was receiving the Sacrament, she knew that God for Christ's sake had forgiven her all her sins. Her father, Dr. Annesley, had had this experience, she said, for over forty years, but had never preached it to others. As early as January 25, 1740, Wesley says, 'I never yet knew one soul thus saved without what you call the faith of assurance; I mean a sure confidence that by the merits of Christ he was reconciled to the favour of God.' In the *Minutes* of 1744, in answer to Q. 8, 'Does any one believe, who has not the witness in himself, or any longer than he sees, loves, obeys God?' he says, 'We apprehend not.' In *Minutes* of 1745 he dares not positively say that there are not exempt cases, and allows that there may be infinite degrees in seeing God. In 1746 he admits that it is hard to judge of individual cases, as we do not know all the circumstances; but he affirms that all sincere persons

who are striving for this assurance will surely find it before they die. In the *Farther Appeal* (1745), Part I, he defends this doctrine against the attack of the Bishop of Lichfield at full length; and again in 1747 in his Letters XLI and XLII to Mr. John Smith (who was probably Thomas Secker).

In 1747, a month after the Conference, he writes to Charles: 'By justifying faith, I mean that faith which whosoever hath not is under the wrath and curse of God. By a sense of pardon I mean a distinct, explicit assurance that my sins are forgiven. I allow (1) That there is such an explicit assurance; (2) That it is the common privilege of real Christians; (3) That it is the proper Christian faith which purifies the heart and overcomes the world. But I cannot allow that justifying faith is such an assurance, or necessarily connected therewith. Because, if justifying faith necessarily implies such an explicit assurance of pardon, then every one who has it not, and every one so long as he has it not, is under the wrath and curse of God. But this is a supposition contrary to Scripture and experience (Isa. i. 10 and Acts x. 34). Again, the assertion that justifying faith is a sense of pardon is contrary to reason, it is flatly absurd. For how can a sense of our having received pardon be the condition of our receiving it?' In other words, we do not believe, because we have received the witness of the Spirit; but normally we receive the witness of the Spirit as soon as we believe.

This doctrine Wesley held and preached to the end; but experience led him to discard more explicitly his first view that there could be no salvation without assurance. Thus in his answer to Prof. Rutherford in 1768 he says: 'I believe a consciousness of being in the favour of God (which I do not term *full assurance*, since it is frequently weakened, nay, perhaps interrupted, by returns of doubt or fear) is the common privilege of Christians, fearing God and working righteousness. Yet I do not affirm there are no exceptions to this general rule. . . . Therefore I have not, for many years, thought a consciousness of acceptance to be essential to justifying faith.'

The opposition which was aroused by Wesley's teaching on this point was due to the not unnatural reaction, after the Restoration, from the extravagant claims of many of the Puritans to special divine illumination. Thus Butler in *Hudibras* i. 1 describes Ralpho, the squire, who stands for the Independents, as getting his knowledge from the New Light:

'Whate'er men speak by this new light  
Still they are sure to be i' th' right;  
'Tis a dark lanthorn of the Spirit  
Which none see by but those that bear it;  
A light that falls down from on high  
For Spiritual trades to cozen by.'

If a man could claim a direct illumination of the Spirit on one point, why not on many, or all, others? Thus the door would be thrown open to all kinds of wild and extravagant ideas, against which it would be impossible to argue, because their authors held them to be the result of direct divine inspiration. Many good people, too, like Mrs. Susanna Wesley, feared to be presumptuous if they claimed such a gift. And when to this is added the unspiritual character of the period, and its passion for cold correctness and good form, it is easy to see why the early Methodists were branded as enthusiasts and madmen, chiefly because they maintained the possibility and realization of the direct witness of the Spirit. As Dr. Cutten (*Psychological Phenomena of Christianity*, p. 234) says, 'Pentecost needed a defence against the charge of drunkenness.'

Recent studies in the psychology of the spiritual life confirm Wesley's teaching, though they do not always use his language. They agree in holding that in some way there must be a direct communication of the divine to the human spirit for the full development of the higher life. Thus Prof. Boyce Gibson, of the Melbourne University (who bears two names that will always be memorable in Methodism), says of Rudolf Eucken: 'Eucken's own explicit conviction is that the immediate revelation of this all-inclusive spiritual life to ours, and its power to maintain itself steadily in presence of the perils and limitations of our human nature, is an axiomatic fact, apart from which there can be no root of truth or of reason in our lives at all. It is in this intimacy of our life with God's that Eucken finds the new immediacy that can alone satisfy the life that has broken from the immediacy of sense, and inspire our human frailty for its redemptive mission in the world.' Bergson holds that the highest thing in man is his 'susceptibility for God,' which culminates in a 'real union of being' with God. Von Haering (*Ethics of Christian Life*, p. 197) says: 'The assurance of salvation is a present experience of blessedness and a certain hope of blessedness, and is present blessedness in fellowship with God.' Dr. Cutten, in the work cited above, p. 250, says, in reference to the theory that the experience of the witness of the Spirit is due to suggestion: 'To say that it is suggestion only is doing violence to the united testimony of thousands whose evidence is as valuable as any in the land.'

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*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.*—ROM. viii. 16.

1. How many vain men, not understanding what they spake, neither whereof they affirmed, have wrested this scripture to the great loss, if not the destruction, of their souls! How

many have mistaken the voice of their own imagination for this witness of the Spirit of God, and thence idly presumed they were the children of God, while they were doing the works of the devil! These are truly and properly enthusiasts; and, indeed, in the worst sense of the word. But with what difficulty are they convinced thereof, especially if they have drank deep into that spirit of error. All endeavours to bring them to the knowledge of themselves, they will then account fighting against God; and that vehemence and impetuosity of spirit, which they call 'contending earnestly for the faith,' sets them so far above all the usual methods of conviction, that we may well say, 'With men it is impossible.'

2. Who then can be surprised, ~~if many reasonable men~~, seeing the dreadful effects of this delusion, and labouring to keep at the utmost distance from it, should sometimes lean toward another extreme?—if they are not forward to believe any who speak of having this witness, concerning which others have so grievously erred?—if they are almost ready to set all down for enthusiasts who use the expressions which have been so terribly abused?—yea, if they should question whether the witness or testimony here spoken of be the privilege of *ordinary* Christians, and not, rather, one of those *extraordinary* gifts which they suppose belonged only to the apostolic age?

3. But is there any necessity laid upon us of running either into one extreme or the other? May we not steer a middle course—keep a sufficient distance from that spirit of error and enthusiasm, without denying the gift of God, and giving

Par. 2. Gwatkin, in *The Knowledge of God*, ii. 242, says: 'There was some reason for the English distrust of what in the eighteenth century was called Enthusiasm. A very little study of John Wesley as a politician or as a general observer will show one of the sanest minds of the eighteenth century.'

The Bishop of Lichfield, in a charge published in 1744, maintains that the witness of the Spirit was one of the extraordinary gifts of the Apos-

tolic age; his words are: 'The fore-mentioned testimony of the Spirit was the public testimony of miraculous gifts; and consequently the witness of the Spirit that we are the children of God cannot possibly be applied to the private testimony of the Spirit given to our own consciences, as is pretended by modern enthusiasts.' Wesley answers him in the *Farther Appeal*, published in 1745.



up the great privilege of His children? Surely we may. In order thereto, let us consider, in the presence and fear of God,—

I. WHAT IS THIS WITNESS OR TESTIMONY OF OUR SPIRIT; WHAT IS THE TESTIMONY OF GOD'S SPIRIT; AND, HOW DOES HE 'BEAR WITNESS WITH OUR SPIRIT THAT WE ARE THE CHILDREN OF GOD'?

II. HOW IS THIS JOINT TESTIMONY OF GOD'S SPIRIT AND OUR OWN, CLEARLY AND SOLIDLY DISTINGUISHED FROM THE PRESUMPTION OF A NATURAL MIND, AND FROM THE DELUSION OF THE DEVIL?

I. 1. Let us first consider, what is the witness or testimony of our spirit. But here I cannot but desire all those who are for swallowing up the testimony of the Spirit of God in the rational testimony of our own spirit, to observe, that in this text the Apostle is so far from speaking of the testimony of our own spirit *only*, that it may be questioned whether he speaks of it *at all*—whether he does not speak *only* of the testimony of God's Spirit. It does not appear but the original text may be fairly understood thus. The Apostle had just said, in the preceding verse, 'Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father', and immediately subjoins, *Αὐτὸ τὸ Πνεῦμα* (some copies read, *τὸ αὐτὸ Πνεῦμα*) *συμμαρτυρεῖ τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν ὅτι ἐσμὲν τέκνα Θεοῦ*, which may be translated, 'The same Spirit beareth witness to our spirit, that we are the children of God' (The preposition *σύν* only denoting, that He witnesses this *at the same time* that He enables us to cry, Abba, Father). But I contend not; seeing so many other texts, with the experience of all real Christians, sufficiently

I. 1. 'The same Spirit.' This is the rendering in the *Notes on the New Testament*; but it is certainly wrong. I cannot imagine what copies Wesley found with the reading *τὸ αὐτὸ Πνεῦμα* (the same Spirit); Tischendorf does not even mention any such variant in his Eighth Critical Edition. *Αὐτὸ τὸ Πνεῦμα* can only mean the Spirit Himself, the

neuter gender being, of course, due to purely grammatical reasons. Then the suggestion that *συμμαρτυρεῖ* means 'that He witnesses this at the same time that He enables us to cry, Abba, Father' is absurd. Obviously Wesley did not himself feel quite sure of his ground—'I contend not'! It was a pity to spoil this argument by such a weak start.

evinced, that there is in every believer, both the testimony of God's Spirit, and the testimony of his own, that he is a child of God.

2. With regard to the latter, the foundation thereof is laid in those numerous texts of Scripture which describe the marks of the children of God, and that so plain, that he which runneth may read them. These are also collected together, and placed in the strongest light, by many both ancient and modern writers. If any need farther light, he may receive it by attending on the ministry of God's word; by meditating thereon before God in secret; and by conversing with those who have the knowledge of His ways. And by the reason or understanding that God has given him, which religion was designed not to extinguish, but to perfect—according to that of the Apostle, 'Brethren, be not children in understanding; in malice' or wickedness 'be ye children, but in understanding be ye men' (1 Cor. xiv. 20)—every man applying those scriptural marks to himself may know whether he is a child of God. Thus, if he know, first, 'as many as are led by the Spirit of God,' into all holy tempers and actions, 'they are the sons of God' (for which he has the infallible assurance of holy writ); secondly, I am thus 'led by the Spirit of God'; he will easily conclude, 'Therefore I am a son of God.'

3. Agreeable to this are all those plain declarations of St. John, in his First Epistle: 'Hereby we know that we do know Him, if we keep His commandments' (chap. ii. 3). 'Whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him'; that we are indeed ~~the~~ children of God (verse 5). 'If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him' (verse 29). 'We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren' (chap. iii. 14). 'Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall

2. 'Not to extinguish but to perfect.' An oblique hit at the Mystics, brother Samuel, November 23, 1736, to whose teachings Wesley had been drawn when he was in Savannah, but whom he soon found to be 'the most dangerous of the enemies' of Christianity. In a letter to his brother Samuel, November 23, 1736, he says, 'They have absolutely renounced their reason and understanding.'

assure our hearts before Him ' (verse 19) ; namely, because we ' love one another, not in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.' ' Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, because He hath given us of His ' loving ' Spirit ' (chap. iv. 13). And, ' Hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the ' obedient ' Spirit which He hath given us ' (chap. iii. 24).

4. It is highly probable there never were any children of God, from the beginning of the world unto this day, who were farther advanced in the grace of God, and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, than the Apostle John, at the time when he wrote these words, and the fathers in Christ to whom he wrote. Notwithstanding which, it is evident, both the Apostle himself, and all those pillars in God's temple, were very far from despising these marks of their being the children of God, and that they applied them to their own souls for the confirmation of their faith. Yet all this is no other than rational evidence, the witness of our spirit, our reason or understanding. It all resolves into this: Those who have these marks are children of God: but we have these marks: therefore we are children of God.

5. But how does it appear, that we have these marks? This is a question which still remains. How does it appear, that we do love God and our neighbour, and that we keep His commandments? Observe, that the meaning of the question is, How does it appear to *ourselves*, not to *others*? I would ask him, then, that proposes this question, How does it appear to you, that you are alive, and that you are now in ease, and not in pain? Are you not immediately conscious of it? By the same immediate consciousness, you will know if your soul is alive to God; if you are saved from the pain of proud wrath, and have the ease of a meek and quiet spirit. By the same means you cannot but perceive if you love, rejoice, and delight

5. The essential point is that one who has by regeneration received the gift of life in Christ cannot but be conscious of it. Whether regeneration be regarded as a new birth, or as a resurrection from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, or as

the introduction to the new world of spiritual experiences, it must be accompanied by new perceptions and new powers; and of these the recipient must be conscious. One thing he knows, that, whereas he was blind, now he sees.

in God. By the same you must be directly assured if you love your neighbour as yourself ; if you are kindly affectioned to all mankind, and full of gentleness and long-suffering. And with regard to the outward mark of the children of God, which is, according to St. John, the keeping His commandments, you undoubtedly know in your own breast, if, by the grace of God, it belongs to you. Your conscience informs you from day to day, if you do not take the name of God within your lips, unless with seriousness and devotion, with reverence and godly fear ; if you remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy ; if you honour your father and mother ; if you do to all as you would they should do unto you ; if you possess your body in sanctification and honour , and if, whether you eat or drink, you are temperate therein, and do all to the glory of God.

6. Now this is properly the testimony of our own spirit ; even the testimony of our own conscience, that God hath given us to be holy of heart, and holy in outward conversation. It is a consciousness of our having received, in and by the Spirit of adoption, the tempers mentioned in the Word of God, as belonging to His adopted children , even a loving heart toward God, and toward all mankind , hanging with child-like confidence on God our Father, desiring nothing but Him, casting all our care upon Him, and embracing every child of man with earnest, tender affection, [so as to be ready to lay down our life for our brother, as Christ laid down His life for us,—] a consciousness that we are inwardly conformed, by the Spirit of God, to the image of His Son, and that we walk before Him in justice, mercy, and truth, doing the things which are pleasing in His sight.

7. But what is that testimony of God's Spirit, which is superadded to, and conjoined with, this ? How does He ' bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God ' ? It is hard to find words in the language of men to explain ' the deep things of God.' Indeed, there are none that will

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7. The first sentence of this definition is unexceptionable ; the statement of the text is that the Spirit bears witness ' that we are the children of God.' But the Spirit does not directly bear witness that Christ

hath loved us, or that our sins are blotted out. These conclusions are rather inferences from His direct witness to our adoption, than the subjects of direct revelation apart from that.

adequately express what the children of God experience. But perhaps one might say (desiring any who are taught of God to correct, to soften, or strengthen the expression), the testimony of the Spirit is an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly witnesses to my spirit, that I am a child of God; that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given Himself for me; and that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God.

8. That this testimony of the Spirit of God must needs, in the very nature of things, be antecedent to the testimony of our own spirit, may appear from this single consideration. We must be holy of heart, and holy in life, before we can be conscious that we are so, before we can have the testimony of our spirit, that we are inwardly and outwardly holy. But we must love God, before we can be holy at all; this being the root of all holiness. Now we cannot love God, till we know He loves us. 'We love Him, because He first loved us.' And we cannot know His pardoning love to us, till His Spirit witnesses it to our spirit. Since, therefore, this testimony of His Spirit must precede the love of God and all holiness, of consequence it must precede our inward consciousness thereof, or the testimony of our spirit concerning them.

9. Then, and not till then—when the Spirit of God beareth that witness to our spirit, 'God hath loved thee, and given

8. Wesley makes the mistake of regarding adoption and regeneration as two distinct operations of the Holy Spirit; whereas they are two aspects of the same thing, distinguishable in thought but not in fact. Dr. Pope (iii. 3) says: 'No terms are more strictly correlative than regeneration and adoption. They describe the same blessing under two aspects; the former referring to the filial character, the latter to the filial privilege. But they are not thus closely connected as cause and effect; they are co-ordinate, and the link between them is the common sonship.' Sonship may be regarded as

a vital relation between two persons, one of whom begets and the other is begotten in the image of his father; or it may be regarded as a legal relation, in which both parties accept certain responsibilities, and are entitled to certain rights, the father to obedience, the son to protection and heirship. St. John prefers the former, which is the deeper aspect of the matter, as being a natural process; St. Paul emphasizes the latter, which is artificial and arises from legal enactment. It must be remembered that adoption was very common in the communities of the Roman Empire; and the procedure

His own Son to be the propitiation for thy sins, the Son of God hath loved thee, and hath washed thee from thy sins in His blood '—' we love God, because He first loved us ' ; and, for His sake, we love our brother also. And of this we cannot but be conscious to ourselves, we ' know the things that are freely given to us of God.' We know that we love God, and keep His commandments, and ' hereby also we know that we are of God.' This is that testimony of our own spirit, which, so long as we continue to love God and keep His commandments, continues joined with the testimony of God's Spirit, ' that we are the children of God.'

10. Not that I would by any means be understood, by anything which has been spoken concerning it, to exclude the operation of the Spirit of God, even from the testimony of our own spirit. In no wise. It is He that not only worketh in us every manner of thing that is good, but also shines upon His own work, and clearly shows what He has wrought. Accordingly, this is spoken of by St. Paul, as one great end of our receiving the Spirit, ' that we may know the things which are freely given to us of God ': that He may strengthen the testimony of our conscience, touching our ' simplicity and godly sincerity ' ; and give us to discern, in a fuller and stronger light, that we now do the things which please Him.

11. Should it still be inquired, ' How does the Spirit of

was prescribed by law. The boy who was to be adopted was legally the slave of his natural father ; it was first necessary, therefore, to *redeem* him, and this was done in the presence of seven *witnesses*, who set their *seals* to the document certifying the transaction. Then the adoptive father touched the boy with the ritual wand, and said, ' I claim this man as my son.' Thenceforward he became legally his son, entitled to a share in his *inheritance*, and to take part in the sacrifices of the family. So St. Paul describes the believer as first redeemed from the bondage of the law, then as

adopted into the family of God, with all its rights of access to the Father and co-heirship with his elder brother Christ. Then he is sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who bears joint witness with his own spirit to the whole transaction. This witness is simultaneous, not, as Wesley tries to prove, successive. The Spirit bears witness along with our own spirit ; and the testimony is both joint and several. Neither is ' afore or after other.' The whole question of adoption is treated most illuminatingly by my old school-fellow Dr. W. E. B. Ball in his *St. Paul and the Roman Law*.

God "bear witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God," so as to exclude all doubt, and evince the reality of sonship?—the answer is clear from what has been observed above. And first, as to the witness of our spirit: the soul intimately and evidently perceives when it loves, delights, rejoices in God, as when it loves and delights in anything on earth. And it can no more doubt, whether it loves, delights and rejoices or no, than whether it exists or no. If, therefore, this be just reasoning,

He that now loves God, that delights and rejoices in God with an humble joy, an holy delight, and an obedient love, is a child of God:

But I thus love, delight, and rejoice in God,

Therefore, I am a child of God:—

Then a Christian can in no wise doubt of his being a child of God. Of the former proposition he has as full an assurance as he has that the Scriptures are of God, and of his loving God, he has an inward proof, which is nothing short of self-evidence. Thus, the testimony of our own spirit is the most intimate conviction manifested to our hearts, in a manner, as beyond all reasonable doubt to evince the reality of our sonship.

12. The manner how the *divine* testimony is manifested to the heart, I do not take upon me to explain. Such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me: I cannot attain to it. The wind bloweth, and I hear the sound thereof; but I cannot tell how it cometh, or whither it goeth. As no man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man that is in him, so the *manner* of the things of God knoweth no man, save the Spirit of God. But the fact we know, namely, that the Spirit of God does give a believer such a testimony of adoption, that while it is present to the soul, he can no more doubt the reality of his sonship, than he can doubt of the rising of the sun, while he stands in the full blaze of his beams.

12. Many of the first Methodists claimed to have received the witness by an audible voice, or a flash of light, or a vivid dream, or the application of some passage of Scripture.

Wesley, whilst not questioning the genuineness of these experiences, most sanely refuses to limit the One of Israel to any particular method of self-revelation.

II. 1. How this joint testimony of God's Spirit and our spirit may be clearly and solidly distinguished from the presumption of a natural mind, and from the delusion of the devil, is the next thing to be considered. And it highly imports all who desire the salvation of God, to consider it with the deepest attention, as they would not deceive their own souls. An error in this is generally observed to have the most fatal consequences: the rather, because he that errs, seldom discovers his mistake, till it is too late to remedy it.

2. And, first, how is this testimony to be distinguished from the presumption of a natural mind? It is certain, one who was never convinced of sin is always ready to flatter himself, and to think of himself, especially in spiritual things, more highly than he ought to think. And hence, it is in no wise strange, if one who is vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, when he hears of this privilege of true Christians among whom he undoubtedly ranks himself, should soon work himself up into a persuasion that he is already possessed thereof. Such instances now abound in the world, and have abounded in all ages. How then may the real testimony of the Spirit with our spirit be distinguished from this damning presumption?

3. I answer, the holy Scriptures abound with marks, whereby the one may be distinguished from the other. They describe, in the plainest manner, the circumstances which go before, which accompany, and which follow, the true, genuine testimony of the Spirit of God with the spirit of a believer. Whoever carefully weighs and attends to these will not need to put darkness for light. He will perceive so wide a difference, with respect to all these, between the real and the pretended witness of the Spirit, that there will be no danger, I might say, no possibility, of confounding the one with the other.

4. By these, one who vainly presumes on the gift of God might surely know, if he really desired it, that he hath been hitherto 'given up to a strong delusion,' and suffered to believe

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II. 4. This test is normally a sound one, provided it is understood that repentance need not involve the agonizing experience described in Sermon IX, ii. Wesley's converts, especially in the earlier years of his evangelical mission, were almost all people who had grown up in an



a lie. For the Scriptures lay down those clear, obvious marks, as preceding, accompanying, and following that gift, which a little reflection would convince him, beyond all doubt, were never found in his soul. For instance: the Scripture describes repentance, or conviction of sin, as constantly going before this witness of pardon. So, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand' (Matt. iii. 2). 'Repent ye, and believe the gospel' (Mark i. 15). 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you, for the remission of sins' (Acts ii. 38). 'Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out' (Acts iii. 19). In conformity whereto, our Church also, continually places repentance before pardon, or the witness of it. 'He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe His holy gospel.' 'Almighty God hath promised forgiveness of sins to all them who, with hearty repentance and true faith, turn unto Him.' But he is a stranger even to this repentance he hath never known a broken and a contrite heart 'the remembrance of his sins' was never 'grievous unto him,' nor 'the burden of them intolerable.' In repeating those words, he never meant what

irreligious atmosphere, and had lived sinful lives. It was natural, therefore, that he should take their experience of repentance as the normal one. But in the case, happily not an infrequent one, where children have been brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord in godly homes and in the Sunday school, whilst there is generally a time when they consciously and definitely surrender themselves to the service of Christ, there will not be any such poignant sense of sin as is here contemplated.

Dr. E. E. Hale, quoted in James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 82, testifies: 'Any man has an advantage, not to be estimated, who is born, as I was, into a family where the religion is simple and rational; who is trained in the theory of such a religion, so that he never knows,

for an hour, what these religious or irreligious struggles are. I always knew God loved me, and I was always grateful to Him for the world He placed me in.' In my long association with theological students, both at Headingley and in Melbourne, I have found many who were brought up in godly homes, and who could not remember any time when they felt themselves estranged from God, nor recall any definite experience of conversion. Indeed, as Mr. Hellier always maintained, this ought to be the normal experience of the children of godly parents; he went so far as to say (*Life*, p. 344), 'There need be no days in the life of our children without salvation.'

The quotations are (1) from the Absolution in the Order for Morning Prayer; (2) from the Absolution in

he said; he merely paid a compliment to God. And were it only from the want of this previous work of God, he hath too great reason to believe that he hath grasped a mere shadow, and never yet known the real privilege of the sons of God.

5. Again the Scriptures describe the being born of God, which must precede the witness that we are His children, as a vast and mighty change; a change 'from darkness to light,' as well as 'from the power of Satan unto God'; as a 'passing from death unto life,' a resurrection from the dead. Thus the Apostle to the Ephesians: 'You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins' (ii. 1). And again, 'When we were dead in sins, He hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus' (verses 5, 6). But what knoweth he, concerning whom we now speak, of any such change as this? He is altogether unacquainted with this whole matter. This is a language which he does not understand. He tells you he always was a Christian. He knows no time when he had need of such a change. By this also, if he give himself leave to think, may he know, that he is not born

the Order for Holy Communion; (3) from the General Confession in the Order for Holy Communion.

5. A curious self-contradiction! In i. 8 we have been told that the testimony of God's Spirit must needs be antecedent to the testimony of our own spirit; yet here it is stated that regeneration must precede the witness of the Spirit. It is unusual to find in Wesley such a confusion of ideas; he failed to make any clear distinction in thought between adoption and regeneration, or to realize that, as we have seen, they are two aspects of one blessing, and are simultaneous. The tests that follow in sections 6-8 come to this, that we must determine the genuineness of the witness of the Spirit by the existence in us of those tempers which, if i. 8 and 9 are to be believed, are some of its results; in

other words, by the witness of our own spirit. Prof. James agrees with this (*Var. Relig. Exper.* p. 238):

'The real witness of the spirit to the second birth is to be found only in the disposition of the genuine child of God, the permanently patient heart, the love of self eradicated.'

But this is to ignore the teaching of section 9, that the witness of the spirit is 'immediately and directly perceived, if our spiritual senses are rightly disposed'; though in section 12, Wesley again falls into the same vicious circle, and says that we can only determine whether our senses are rightly disposed by the testimony of our own spirit. The whole trouble is got rid of when it is recognized that we are dealing with a *συνμαρτυρία*, a joint witness, the agreement of the two witnesses establishing the truth of their testimony.

of the Spirit ; that he has never yet known God , but has mistaken the voice of nature for the voice of God.

6. But waiving the consideration of whatever he has or has not experienced in time past ; by the present marks may we easily distinguish a child of God from a presumptuous self-deceiver. The Scriptures describe that joy in the Lord which accompanies the witness of His Spirit, as an humble joy ; a joy that abases to the dust, that makes a pardoned sinner cry out, 'I am vile! What am I, or my father's house! - Now mine eye seeth Thee, I abhor myself in dust and ashes!' And wherever lowliness is, there is meekness, patience, gentleness, long-suffering. There is a soft, yielding spirit ; a mildness and sweetness, a tenderness of soul, which words cannot express. But do these fruits attend that *supposed* testimony of the Spirit in a presumptuous man ? Just the reverse. The more confident he is of the favour of God, the more is he lifted up ; the more does he exalt himself ; the more haughty and assuming is his whole behaviour. The stronger witness he imagines himself to have, the more overbearing is he to all around him ; the more incapable of receiving any reproof ; the more impatient of contradiction. Instead of being more meek, and gentle, and teachable, more 'swift to hear, and slow to speak,' he is more slow to hear, and swift to speak ; more unready to learn of any one , more fiery and vehement in his temper, and eager in his conversation. Yea, perhaps, there will sometimes appear a kind of fierceness in his air, his manner of speaking, his whole deportment, as if he were just going to take the matter out of God's hands, and himself to 'devour the adversaries.'

7. Once more the Scriptures teach, 'This is the love of God,' the sure mark thereof, 'that we keep His commandments' (1 John v. 3). And our Lord Himself saith, 'He that keepeth My commandments, he it is that loveth Me' (John xiv. 21). Love rejoices to obey , to do, in every point, what-

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6. So Prof. James says (*Var. Relig. Exper.*, p. 343), 'Fanaticism is found only where the character is masterful and aggressive.' Wesley had met cases of this kind in his

Societies ; John Cennick amongst others, whom he expelled from the Society in 1741.

7. This Antinomian leaven was also at work in the Societies at this

ever is acceptable to the beloved. A true lover of God hastens ~~to do His will on earth as it is done in heaven.~~ But is this the character of the presumptuous pretender to the love of God? Nay, but His love gives him a liberty to disobey, to break, not ~~keep, the commandments of God.~~ Perhaps, when he was in fear of the wrath of God, he did labour to do His will. But now, looking on himself as 'not under the law,' he thinks he is no longer obliged to observe it. He is therefore less zealous of good works, less careful to abstain from evil, less watchful over his own heart; less jealous over his tongue. He is less earnest to deny himself, and to take up his cross daily. In a word, the whole form of his life is changed, since he has fancied himself to be *at liberty*. He is no longer 'exercising himself unto godliness', 'wrestling not only with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers,' enduring hardships, 'agonizing to enter in at the strait gate.' No, he has found an easier way to heaven; a broad, smooth, flowery path; in which he can say to his soul, 'Soul, take thy ease; eat, drink, and be merry.' It follows, with undeniable evidence, that he has not the true testimony of his own spirit. He cannot be conscious of having those marks which he hath not, that lowliness, meekness, and obedience nor yet can the Spirit of the God of truth bear witness to a lie, or testify that he is a child of God, when he is manifestly a child of the devil.

8. Discover thyself, thou poor self-deceiver!—thou who art confident of being a child of God, thou who sayest, 'I have the witness in myself,' and therefore defiest all thy enemies. Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting; even in the balance of the sanctuary. The word of the Lord hath tried thy soul, and proved thee to be reprobate silver. Thou art not lowly of heart; therefore thou hast not received the Spirit of Jesus unto this day. Thou art not gentle and meek; therefore thy joy is nothing worth: it is not joy in the Lord.

time. In 1746 (March 23) Wesley records a conversation with J. W. at Birmingham, in which this man claimed to have a right to any one's

property, and to all women. One Roger Ball, of Dublin, held the same views.

Thou dost not keep His commandments : therefore thou lovest Him not, neither art thou partaker of the Holy Ghost. It is consequently as certain and as evident as the oracles of God can make it, His Spirit doth not bear witness with thy spirit that thou art a child of God. O cry unto Him, that the scales may fall off thine eyes ; that thou mayest know thyself as thou art known ; that thou mayest receive the sentence of death in thyself, till thou hear the voice that raises the dead, saying, ' Be of good cheer : thy sins are forgiven ; thy faith hath made thee whole.'

9. ' But how may one who has the real witness in himself distinguish it from presumption ? ' How, I pray, do you distinguish day from night ? How do you distinguish light from darkness ; or the light of a star, or a glimmering taper, from the light of the noonday sun ? Is there not an inherent, obvious, essential difference between the one and the other ? And do you not immediately and directly perceive that difference, provided your senses are rightly disposed ? In like manner, there is an inherent, essential difference between spiritual light and spiritual darkness, and between the light wherewith the Sun of Righteousness shines upon our heart, and that glimmering light which arises only from ' sparks of our own kindling ' and this difference also is immediately and directly perceived, if our spiritual senses are rightly disposed.

10. To require a more minute and philosophical account of the manner whereby we distinguish these, and of the *criteria*, or intrinsic marks, whereby we know the voice of God, is to make a demand which can never be answered, no, not by one who has the deepest knowledge of God. Suppose, when Paul answered before Agrippa, the wise Roman had said, ' Thou talkest of hearing the voice of the Son of God. How dost thou know it was His voice ? By what *criteria*, what intrinsic marks, dost thou know the voice of God ? Explain to me the *manner* of distinguishing this from a human or angelic voice.' Can you believe, the Apostle himself would have once attempted to answer so idle a demand ? And yet, doubtless, the moment he heard that voice, he knew it was the voice of God. But

*how* he knew this, who is able to explain? Perhaps neither man nor angel.

11. To come yet closer: suppose God were now to speak to any soul, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee,' He must be willing that soul should know His voice, otherwise He would speak in vain. And He is able to effect this, for, whenever He wills, to do is present with Him. And He does effect it: that soul is absolutely assured, 'This voice is the voice of God.' But yet he who hath that witness in himself cannot explain it to one who hath it not; nor indeed is it to be expected that he should. Were there any natural medium to prove, or natural method to explain, the things of God to unexperienced men, then the natural man might discern and know the things of the Spirit of God. But this is utterly contrary to the assertion of the Apostle, that 'he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned'; even by spiritual senses, which the natural man hath not.

12. 'But how shall I know that my spiritual senses are rightly disposed?' This also is a question of vast importance; for if a man mistake in this, he may run on in endless error and delusion. 'And how am I assured that this is not my case; and that I do not mistake the voice of the Spirit?' Even by the testimony of your own spirit: by 'the answer of a good conscience toward God.' By the fruits which He hath wrought in your spirit, you shall know the testimony of the Spirit of God. Hereby you shall know that you are in no delusion, that you have not deceived your own soul. The immediate fruits of the Spirit, ruling in the heart, are 'love, joy, peace, bowels of mercies, humbleness of mind, meekness, gentleness, long-suffering.' And the outward fruits are, the doing good to all men; the doing no evil to any; and the walking in the light—a zealous, uniform obedience to all the commandments of God.

13. By the same fruits shall you distinguish this voice of God from any delusion of the devil. That proud spirit cannot humble thee before God. He neither can nor would soften thy heart, and melt it first into earnest mourning after God, and then into filial love. It is not the adversary of God and

man that enables thee to love thy neighbour, or to put on meekness, gentleness, patience, temperance, and the whole armour of God. He is not divided against himself, or a destroyer of sin, his own work. No; it is none but the Son of God who cometh 'to destroy the works of the devil.' As surely therefore as holiness is of God, and as sin is the work of the devil, so surely the witness thou hast in thyself is not of Satan, but of God.

14. Well then mayest thou say, 'Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!' Thanks be unto God, who giveth me to 'know in whom I have believed'; who hath 'sent forth the Spirit of His Son into my heart, crying, Abba, Father,' and even now, 'bearing witness with my spirit that I am a child of God'! And see, that not only thy lips, but thy life show forth His praise. He hath sealed thee for His own, glorify Him then in thy body and thy spirit, which are His. Beloved, if thou hast this hope in thyself, purify thyself, as He is pure. While thou beholdest what manner of love the Father hath given thee, that thou shouldest be called a child of God, cleanse thyself 'from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God'; and let all thy thoughts, words, and works be a spiritual sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God through Christ Jesus!

## SERMON XI

### THE WITNESS OF OUR OWN SPIRIT

I CAN find no record either in the *Journal* or in the sermon list of the preaching of this sermon. No doubt the substance of it was often given to the Societies in the expositions which were regularly delivered to them by Wesley; but it is rather a treatise than a sermon, and is not adapted for a general congregation. Even for believers it needs, as Wesley felt, the qualifications which he added in the two following sermons in the 1771 edition. Sermon CV, on Conscience, is from the first part of the same text.

The object of the sermon is to explain what is meant by the witness of our own spirit referred to in Rom. viii. 16, as distinguished from the witness of the Divine Spirit to our adoption; the indirect as contrasted with the direct evidence of our acceptance. The text is not the best that could have been chosen for this purpose. It is St. Paul's vindication of his conduct at Corinth, which had been attacked by his opponents on the ground that he was a designing adventurer, walking according to the flesh (i.e. actuated by motives of mere worldly shrewdness), enriching himself under pretence of a collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem, and only refusing to take a salary in order to impose on the generosity of his converts. He says in answer to this: 'The boast I make is this, as my conscience testifies to me, that my whole conduct in worldly matters was regulated by holiness and godly sincerity, not by the prudence of the natural man, but by the grace of God, and that more particularly in my relations to you.' There is no reference to his consciousness of acceptance with God, or the witness of his conscience to that. Moreover, the reading of the A.V., on which certain sections of the sermon are based, is doubtful; for ἀπλότητι (simplicity) the better attested reading is ἀγιότητα (holiness).

With regard to this question, it may be well to turn aside for a moment from the explanations of the theologians to the actual experiences immediately following after conversion. These have been scientifically examined and tabulated by Prof. Starbuck and are summarized by Prof. James in *Varieties of Religious Experience*, Lecture X, as follows:



(1) The sense of the coming into life of a higher control ; which results in the loss of all the worry, the sense that all is ultimately well with one, the peace, the harmony, the willingness to be, even though the outer conditions should remain the same.

(2) The sense of perceiving truths not known before. The mysteries of life become lucid ; and often, nay, usually, the solution is more or less unutterable in words.

(3) A sense of clean and beautiful newness within and without. This is often accompanied by a sense of brilliant light, a light ineffable in the soul and in nature.

(4) The most characteristic of all the elements of the conversion crisis is the ecstasy of happiness produced.

Normally this new experience follows a period of depression, doubt, misery, amounting often to utter despair. It is not the result of argument or logical conviction, but follows instantly on the surrender of self to Christ in faith. This is psychologically what is meant by the witness of the Spirit ; but each convert will afterwards explain it in his own way. To one it is the removal of the sense of condemnation, i.e. Justification ; to a second it is the realization that God is his loving Father, i.e. Adoption ; to a third it is the feeling that the old self has gone, and that a new life has come into his soul, i.e. Regeneration. But all these worketh that one and the same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will. Therefore, though the Scripture speaks specifically of the witness of the Spirit to adoption, it would be absurd to say that the consciousness of forgiveness, and the new birth, are not equally His work ; and therefore equally a witness borne by Him to what has taken place. The distinction between justification, adoption, and regeneration is the result of a sound analysis ; but we must not suppose that processes which can be conceived separately in thought are necessarily separate in fact. They are all included in the one process of conversion, and neither can exist without the others. Adoption connects itself with the work of the Father, justification with that of the Son, regeneration with that of the Holy Ghost ; and like their divine authors, these three are one. Moreover, to all three our own spirit bears conjoint witness with the Holy Spirit, re-echoing to His testimony in the conscious joy of pardon, the kindling love of sonship, the pulsing power of the new life.

But all this is the starting-point of the process of sanctification ; the gradual bringing of the whole thought and life into conformity with the law of God ; and unless this follows, it is proof that the supposed direct witness was a delusion. The fruits of the Spirit will be produced in ever richer fullness ; and of this fact both ourselves and others can judge. This is really the indirect witness with which this sermon is concerned—the testimony of a good conscience and a good

life. It is not right to limit the witness of our own spirit to this confirmatory testimony; it is also a party to the direct witness. Hence Dr. Pope thinks the 'indirect witness' the preferable name (iii. 130).

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*This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.*—2 COR. i. 12.

1. SUCH is the voice of every true believer in Christ, so long as he abides in faith and love. 'He that followeth Me,' saith our Lord, 'walketh not in darkness': and while he hath the light, he rejoiceth therein. As he hath 'received the Lord Jesus Christ,' so he walketh in Him, and while he walketh in Him, the exhortation of the Apostle takes place in his soul, day by day, 'Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice.'

2. But that we may not build our house upon the sand (lest when the rains descend, and the winds blow, and the floods arise and beat upon it, it fall, and great be the fall thereof), I intend in the following discourse to show what is the nature and ground of a Christian's joy. We know, in general, it is that happy peace, that calm satisfaction of spirit which arises from such a testimony of his conscience, as is here described by the Apostle. But, in order to understand this the more thoroughly, it will be requisite to weigh all his words; whence will easily appear, both what we are to understand by *conscience*, and what by the *testimony* thereof; and also, how he that hath this testimony rejoiceth evermore.

3. And, first, what are we to understand by *conscience*? What is the meaning of this word that is in every one's mouth? One would imagine it was an exceeding difficult thing to discover this, when we consider how large and numerous

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Par. 1. In John viii. 12 the tenses are future: 'shall not walk in darkness.'

3. This somewhat contemptuous brushing aside of the philosophical treatment of Conscience is hardly worthy of Wesley. The subject is by no means easy to be understood,

and its difficulty is not merely the introduction of 'hard words' into the discussion. It falls within the purview of biology, of psychology, of ethics, and of theology. Dr. Davison, in his Fernley Lecture on *The Christian Conscience*, p. 72, states some of the questions which

volumes have been from time to time wrote on this subject and how all the treasures of ancient and modern learning have been ransacked, in order to explain it. And yet it is to be feared, it has not received much light from all those elaborate inquiries. Rather, have not most of those writers put the cause ; ' darkening counsel by words without knowledge, perplexing a subject, plain in itself and easy to be understood. For, set aside but hard words, and every man of an honest heart will soon understand the thing.

4. God has made us thinking beings, capable of perceiving what is present, and of reflecting or looking back on what is past. In particular, we are capable of perceiving what is passing in our own hearts or lives, of knowing whatsoever we feel or do, and that either while it passes, or when it is past. This we mean when we say, man is a *conscious* being : he has a *consciousness*, or inward perception, both of things present and past, relating to himself, of his own tempers and outward behaviour. But what we usually term *conscience* implies something more than this. It is not barely the knowledge of what is present or the remembrance of our preceding life. To remember, to bear witness either of past or present things, is only one of the least office of conscience its main business

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are raised in its study. Is it intuitive ? Does it judge self or others ? Is it cognisant of motives or actions ? Does it decide essential or comparative moral quality ? Is it legislative, or critical, or judicial ? Is it intellectual, or emotional, or volitional ? Is it infallible ? Can it be educated ? How is it related to religion ? These cannot be settled peremptorily, even by a man of an honest heart.

Sermon CV, On Conscience, should be read along with this section. It was written at Bristol in the first week in March 1788, and speaks with approbation of a treatise on the subject by Monsieur Placatt, a French Protestant divine of the seventeenth

century who died in 1718 ; the title of Francis Hutcheson are criticised on the ground that he leaves the subject wholly out of the question ; and the sermon concludes with a long extract from a sermon on Universal Conscientiousness by Dr. Andrew Wesley's maternal grandfather

4. Originally and by derivation conscience is a synonym for consciousness ; but from the first it tended to be used in the sense of ' the faculty which pronounces on the moral quality of one's actions, motives, approving the right and condemning the wrong.' In common modern speech the two words are quite distinct.

excuse or accuse, to approve or disapprove, to acquit or condemn.

5. Some late writers indeed have given a new name to this, and have chose to style it a *moral sense*. But the old word seems preferable to the new, were it only on this account, that it is more common and familiar among men, and therefore easier to be understood. And to Christians it is undeniably preferable, on another account also, namely, because it is scriptural, because it is the word which the wisdom of God hath chose to use in the inspired writings.

5. The reference is to Lord Shaftesbury, who uses the phrase 'moral sense' in his *Inquiry Concerning Virtue*, i. 3. 1 (1699); and specially to Francis Hutcheson, who really made it current. Born in 1694, he became Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow in 1729. His *Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections, with Illustrations on the Moral Sense*, was published in 1728, and his *System of Moral Philosophy* in 1755. He taught that moral distinctions are apprehended directly by means of a special capacity of the soul, which he calls the Moral Sense. Wesley read an account of his works in Savannah in May 1737. In 1756 he studied with his preachers an abridgement of his works (*Journal*, December 22), and finished the reading of it on July 31, 1758 (in both places he calls him wrongly Hutchinson). On December 17, 1772, on his way to Luton, he read 'Mr. Hutcheson's *Essay on the Passions*,' and remarks, 'He is a beautiful writer, but his scheme cannot stand unless the Bible falls.'

Conscience, Conscientia, is a literal translation of the Greek *συνείδησις*, which is used almost exclusively by St. Paul, never in the Gospels or by St. John, three times by St. Peter, and five times in the Epistle to the

Hebrews. It had at first no moral connotation, but meant *knowledge with*, i.e. not bare consciousness, but present consciousness compared with past — reflection, judgement. In Sermon CV. 2, Wesley says that it implies 'the knowledge of two or more things together; suppose, the knowledge of our words and actions, and at the same time of their goodness or badness.' But I do not suppose that St. Paul or any other Greek writer thought any more of the meaning of *συν* than a modern English author thinks of the meaning of the *con-* in conscience. The word as a whole meant the moral sense, and was so used. It is usage, not derivation, that determines the signification of words.

This definition of conscience is imperfect, as it makes it merely a cognitive faculty. It is more correctly defined in Sermon CV, 7: 'First, it is a witness testifying what we have done. Secondly, it is a judge, passing sentence on what we have done. Thirdly, it, in some sort, executes the sentence, by occasioning a degree of complacency in him that does well, and a degree of uneasiness in him that does evil.' Even this does not quite recognize the volitional aspect of conscience, by virtue of which the judgement of conscience carries with it the obliga-

And according to the meaning wherein it is generally used there, particularly in the Epistles of St. Paul, we may understand by conscience, a faculty or power, implanted by God in every soul that comes into the world, of perceiving what is right or wrong in his own heart or life, in his tempers, thoughts, words, and actions.

6. But what is the rule whereby men are to judge of right and wrong? whereby their conscience is to be directed? The rule of Heathens, as the Apostle teaches elsewhere, is 'the law written in their hearts.' 'These,' saith he, 'not having

tion to act according to that judgement. Dr. Davison (*Christian Conscience*, p. 86) says: 'The judgement of conscience is always more or less accompanied by feeling—feelings which condemn or acquit in a peculiar and characteristic way. Further, the judgement of conscience is obviously and essentially connected with action. An essential part of the judgement which it pronounces is the indefeasible obligation under which every one who recognizes it lies to cause it to become actual.' It would appear that Wesley had not read Bishop Butler's great Sermon II, preached in the Rolls Chapel, and published in 1726. The Bishop says: 'There is a superior principle of reflection or conscience in every man, which distinguishes between the internal principles of his heart, as well as his external actions; which passes judgement upon himself and them; pronounces determinately some actions to be in themselves just, right, good; others to be in themselves evil, wrong, unjust; which, without being consulted, without being advised with, magisterially exerts itself, and approves or condemns him, the doer of them, accordingly; and which, if not forcibly stopped, naturally and always of course goes on to anticipate a higher and more effectual

sentence, which shall hereafter second and affirm its own. . . Had it strength, as it has right, had it power, as it has manifest authority, it would absolutely govern the world.' Wesley had interviewed Butler when he was Bishop of Bristol on August 16 and 18, 1739. The Bishop criticized what he supposed to be Wesley's teaching—'it is a horrid thing, a very horrid thing!'—told him he had no business in his diocese, and advised him 'to go hence.' Such a reception would not dispose him to read Butler's Sermons. However, in January 1746 he read the *Analogy* and re-read it in May 1768; he thought it a fine book, but too hard for the Freethinkers for whom it was intended. I think it likely he may have read the sermons before 1788; for in Sermon CV he speaks like Butler of the natural conscience; and uses the story of Balaam, and the passage about him in Micah (vi. 5), just as Butler does in his Sermon VII on the character of Balaam.

6. The rule of the heathen is what is referred to in Sermon CV as the natural conscience; and there Wesley asks, 'Can it be denied that something of this is found in every man born into the world?' But he objects to the name 'natural conscience' on the ground that it is not natural, but a supernatural gift

the 'outward law, are a law unto themselves: who show the work of the law,' that which the outward law prescribes, 'written in their hearts,' by the finger of God; 'their conscience also bearing witness,' whether they walk by this rule or not, 'and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or even excusing,' acquitting, defending them, ἡ καὶ ἀπολογουμένων (Rom. ii. 14, 15). But the Christian rule of right and wrong is the Word of God, the writings of the Old and New Testament; all that the prophets and 'holy men of old' wrote 'as they were moved by the Holy Ghost'; all that Scripture

of God, due to the direct influence of the Holy Spirit. The same objection might be taken to calling any human power or function natural; for they are all the gift of God, and are only exercised in conjunction with His Spirit; 'in Him we live and move and have our being.' In this respect conscience differs in no wise from our other faculties.

The rendering 'even excusing' rather than 'also excusing' is to be preferred. The point is that the function of conscience is far more often prohibitive and accusatory than the reverse. Socrates told his judges (Plato, *Apol.* p. 31 D) that from his boyhood a voice had come to him which always dissuaded him from doing what he was intending to do, but never positively urged him to do anything.

Conscience has the power to discern the difference between right and wrong, and it might be supposed that therefore it needs no guidance or education. But this is a mistake. Every man knows what is meant by beauty, and has the faculty of discerning and appreciating it; but the aesthetic faculty needs a standard, and has to be trained before it learns always to approve the things that are really excellent in art. So the conscience needs a standard, and that is found by the

Christian in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, as recorded in the New Testament. Wesley makes the whole Bible the standard; but this is a wrong position to take up. The moral teaching of the Old Testament is imperfect and at some points in need of correction. Slavery, war, persecution for theological opinions, hatred of one's enemies, have all been defended by quotations from the Old Testament. That which was said to the men of old requires to be interpreted, or even abrogated by Christ's 'But I say unto you.'

The second paragraph of this section needs some modification. The Bible does not contain a complete code of moral laws. General principles are laid down, but their application is left to the individual conscience; and whilst it may be true that 'nothing is evil but what is here forbidden, either in terms, or by *undeniable inference*,' yet the drawing of such an undeniable inference is often a matter of great difficulty. Cases frequently arise of conflict of duties, as between the law of truth and the law of love; and modern conditions have brought about new problems of conduct which it is not by any means easy to bring under any definite rule of the New Testament. To decide these is the function of the conscience, enlight-

which was 'given by inspiration of God,' and which is ind 'profitable for doctrine,' or teaching the whole will of G 'for reproof' of what is contrary thereto, for 'correctio of error, and 'for instruction,' or training us up, 'in righteo ness' (2 Tim. iii. 16).

This is a lantern unto a Christian's feet, and a light in all paths. This alone he receives as his rule of right or wr of whatever is really good or evil. He esteems nothing good, what is here enjoined, either directly or by plain consequen he accounts nothing evil but what is here forbidden, eit in terms, or by undeniable inference. Whatever the Script neither forbids nor enjoins, either directly or by plain con quence, he believes to be of an indifferent nature, to be in it neither good nor evil; this being the whole and sole outw rule whereby his conscience is to be directed in all things.

7. And if it be directed thereby in fact, then hath he ' answer of a good conscience toward God.' 'A good c science' is what is elsewhere termed by the Apostle, conscience void of offence.' So, what he at one time expre thus, 'I have lived in all good conscience before God u this day' (Acts xxiii. 1); he denotes at another by that pression, 'Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a c science void of offence toward God, and toward men' (cl xxiv. 16). Now, in order to this there is absolutely requi

ened and guided by the Holy Spirit. Wesley lays a little too much stress on the 'written word of God,' and does not adequately recognize the function of the Holy Spirit, who is given, not only to bring to our remembrance the things which Jesus said, but also to guide us into all the truth. In Sermon CV, 13, however, the function of the Holy Spirit is more fully recognized: 'In order to the very existence of a good conscience, the continued influence of the Spirit of God is absolutely needful.'

7. 'The answer of a good conscience,' &c. This difficult passage probably means 'Baptism saves us

into God' [i.e. so as to bring us fellowship with God]; 'not the removal of physical defilement, the demand [or stipulation] of good conscience.' The candidate was asked certain questions, such as 'Dost thou believe? Wilt thou renounce the world? Wilt thou serve Christ?' and it was this demand for an answer such as showed a good conscience that was the essential thing in baptism.

Compare the definition of a good conscience in Sermon CV, 12: 'divine consciousness of walking in things according to the written word of God.'

first, a right understanding of the Word of God, of His ' holy, ~~and~~ acceptable, and perfect will ' concerning us, as it is revealed therein. For it is impossible we should walk by a rule, if we do not know what it means. There is, secondly, required (which how few have attained ! ) a true knowledge of ourselves, a knowledge both of our hearts and lives, of our inward tempers and outward conversation : seeing, if we know them not, it is not possible that we should compare them with our rule. There is required, thirdly, an agreement of our hearts and lives, of our tempers and conversation, of our thoughts, and words, and works, with that rule, with the written Word of God. For, without this, if we have any conscience at all, it can be only an evil conscience. There is, fourthly, required, an inward perception of this agreement with our rule : and this habitual perception, this inward consciousness itself, is properly a *good conscience* , or, in the other phrase of the Apostle, ' a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.'

8. But whoever desires to have a conscience thus void of offence, let him see that he lay the right foundation. Let him remember, ' other foundation ' of this ' can no man lay, than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ.' And let him also be mindful, that no man buildeth on Him but by a living faith , that no man is a partaker of Christ, until he can clearly testify, ' The life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God ' , in Him who is now *revealed* in my heart ; who ' loved me, and gave Himself for me.' Faith alone is that evidence, that conviction, that demonstration of things invisible, whereby, the eyes of our understanding being opened, and divine light poured in upon them, we ' see the wondrous things of God's law ' , the excellency and purity of it ; the height, and depth,

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8. So Dr. Davison (*Christian Conscience*, p. 196) : ' The law of the Christian conscience is summed up in this, " Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." '

This interpretation of 2 Cor. iii. 18 can hardly be justified. The Christian, gazing with unveiled face on

the glory of God revealed in Christ, reflects like a mirror the glorious character of the Saviour. He is the mirror that reflects, not all that is in himself, but the manifested glory of Christ, which is thus reproduced and manifested in him.



and length, and breadth thereof, and of every commandment contained therein. It is by faith that, beholding 'the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,' we perceive, as in a glass, all that is within ourselves, yea, the inmost motions of our souls. And by this alone can that blessed love of God be 'shed abroad in our hearts,' which enables us so to love one another as Christ loved us. By this is that gracious promise fulfilled unto all the Israel of God, 'I will put My laws into their mind, and write' (or engrave) 'them in their hearts' (Heb. viii. 10), hereby producing in their souls an entire agreement with His holy and perfect law, and 'bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.'

And, as an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit, so a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit. As the heart therefore of a believer, so likewise his life, is thoroughly conformed to the rule of God's commandments, in a consciousness whereof, he can give glory to God, and say with the Apostle, 'This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.'

9. 'We have had our conversation.' The Apostle in the original expresses this by one single word, ἀνεστράφημεν; but the meaning thereof is exceeding broad, taking in our whole deportment, yea, every inward as well as outward circumstance, whether relating to our soul or body. It includes every motion of our heart, of our tongue, of our hands and bodily members. It extends to all our actions and words, to the employment of all our powers and faculties, to the manner of using every talent we have received, with respect either to God or man.

10. 'We have had our conversation in the world', even in the world of the ungodly: not only among the children of God (that were comparatively a little thing); but among the children of the devil, among those that lie in wickedness, ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ, *in the wicked one*. What a world is this!

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10. 'In the wicked one' is the meaning, rather than 'in wickedness' (1 John v. 19).

How thoroughly impregnated with the spirit it continually breathes! As our God is good, and doeth good, so the god of this world, and all his children, are evil, and do evil (so far as they are suffered) to all the children of God. Like their father, they are always lying in wait, or 'walking about, seeking whom they may devour', using fraud or force, secret wiles or open violence, to destroy those who are not of the world, continually warring against our souls, and, by old or new weapons, and devices of every kind, labouring to bring them back into the snare of the devil, into the broad road that leadeth to destruction.

II. 'We have had our' whole 'conversation,' in such a world, 'in simplicity and godly sincerity.' First, in simplicity this is what our Lord recommends under the name of a 'single eye.' 'The light of the body,' saith He, is 'the eye. If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.' The meaning whereof is this. What the eye is to the body, that the intention is to all the words and actions: if, therefore, this eye of thy soul be single, all thy actions and conversation shall be 'full of light,' of the light of heaven, of love, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

We are then simple of heart, when the eye of our mind is singly fixed on God, when in all things we aim at God alone, as our God, our portion, our strength, our happiness, our exceeding great reward, our all, in time and eternity. This is simplicity, when a steady view, a single intention of promoting His glory, of doing and suffering His blessed will, runs

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II. Compare Sermon CXVIII, On a Single Eye, written in 1789. As we have said above, the better-supported reading is 'holiness'; but I am not sure that 'simplicity' is not to be preferred. The words ΑΠΛΟΤΗΤΙ and ΑΓΙΟΤΗΤΙ might easily be confused; and the tendency would be to substitute the more familiar ΑΠΙΟΤΗΤΙ for the less common ΑΠΛΟΤΗΤΙ. The latter word has the support of *DEFL* and the old Syriac and Latin versions;

and I have a growing conviction that these so-called Western readings are often right. It certainly suits the context much better. It means literally 'simplicity,' the absence of complication in the motives, a single and straightforward purpose. The passage in Matthew (vi. 22) is not quite relevant here; a 'single eye' there means a sound, healthy eye, as opposed to an 'evil eye,' a diseased eye.

through our whole soul, fills all our heart, and is the constant spring of all our thoughts, desires, and purposes.

12. 'We have had our conversation in the world,' secondly, in 'godly sincerity.' The difference between simplicity and sincerity seems to be chiefly this simplicity regards the intention itself, sincerity the execution of it, and this sincerity relates not barely to our words, but to our whole conversation, as described above. It is not here to be understood in that narrow sense, wherein St. Paul himself sometimes uses it, for speaking the truth, or abstaining from guile, from craft, and dissimulation; but in a more extensive meaning, as actually hitting the mark, which we aim at by simplicity. Accordingly, it implies in this place, that we do, in fact, speak and do all to the glory of God; that all our words are not only pointed at this, but actually conducive thereto, that all our actions flow on in an even stream, uniformly subservient to this great end, and that in our whole lives, we are moving straight toward God, and that continually, walking steadily on in the highway of holiness, in the paths of justice, mercy, and truth.

13. This sincerity is termed by the Apostle, godly sincerity, or the sincerity of God, *εὐλικρινεία Θεοῦ*, to prevent our mistaking or confounding it with the sincerity of the Heathens (for they had also a kind of sincerity among them, for which they professed no small veneration), likewise to denote the object and end of this, as of every Christian virtue, seeing whatever does not ultimately tend to God,

12. The word translated 'sincerity' appears to mean by derivation 'tested by the sunlight,' and so perfectly pure. T. H. Green translates it in this passage 'perfect openness towards God.' The distinction drawn by Wesley cannot be maintained. What St. Paul means is that in all his transactions at Corinth, his conscience testifies that he was absolutely straightforward, that his alleged motives were his real motives, that he had nothing to conceal from

God or man. The repetition 'simplicity and sincerity' is for the sake of emphasis, both words having much the same meaning. By divorcing his text from its context, Wesley was led into a fanciful exegesis; much as was the case in The Almost Christian sermon.

13. This is all imaginary; St. Paul had no thought of distinguishing between Christian and heathen sincerity in this passage.

sinks among 'the beggarly elements of the world.' By styling it the sincerity of God, he also points out the Author of it, the 'Father of lights, from whom every good and perfect gift descendeth'; which is still more clearly declared in the following words, 'Not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God.'

14. 'Not with fleshly wisdom' as if he had said, 'We cannot thus converse in the world, by any natural strength of understanding, neither by any naturally acquired knowledge or wisdom. We cannot gain this simplicity, or practise this sincerity, by the force either of good sense, good nature, or good breeding. It overshoots all our native courage and resolution, as well as all our precepts of philosophy. The power of custom is not able to train us up to this, nor the most exquisite rules of human education. Neither could I Paul ever attain hereto, notwithstanding all the advantages I enjoyed, so long as I was *in the flesh*, in my natural state, and pursued it only by *fleshly*, natural wisdom.'

And yet surely, if any man could, Paul himself might have attained thereto by that wisdom for we can hardly conceive any who was more highly favoured with all the gifts both of nature and education. Besides his natural abilities, probably not inferior to those of any person then upon the earth, he had all the benefits of learning, studying at the University of Tarsus, afterwards brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, a person of the greatest account, both for knowledge and integrity, that was then in the whole Jewish nation.

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14. Tarsus was the seat of a university of considerable reputation. Strabo (xiv. 4) says: 'So great is the zeal of the inhabitants for philosophy and all other encyclic training, that they have surpassed even Athens and Alexandria, and every other place one could mention in which philological and philosophical schools have arisen.' It produced such scholars as Athenodorus the Stoic, the tutor of Octavius Caesar, Nestor the Academician, the

tutor of Marcellus, and Nestor the Stoic, the tutor of Tiberius. But it is very doubtful whether the young Saul, a Pharisee 'after the strictest sect of our religion,' would have been allowed to attend the lectures in a Gentile University. Dr. Findlay, in his article on 'Paul' in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, will only say that 'he could not but receive intellectual stimulus, if only by way of aversion, from such a theatre of mental activity.' He

And he had all the possible advantages of religious education, being a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee, trained up in the very straitest sect or profession, distinguished from all others by a more eminent strictness. And herein he had 'profited above many' others, 'who were his equals' in years, 'being more abundantly zealous' of whatever he thought would please God, and 'as touching the righteousness of the law, blameless.' But it could not be, that he should hereby attain this simplicity and godly sincerity. It was all but lost labour; in a deep, piercing sense of which he was at length constrained to cry out, 'The things which were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord' (Phil. iii. 7, 8).

15. It could not be that ever he should attain to this, but by the 'excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ' our Lord; or 'by the grace of God'—another expression of nearly the same import. By 'the grace of God' is sometimes to be understood that free love, that unmerited mercy, by which I a sinner, through the merits of Christ, am now reconciled to God. But in this place it rather means that power of God the Holy Ghost, which 'worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.' As soon as ever the grace of God in the former sense, His pardoning love, is manifested to our souls, the grace of God in the latter sense, the power of His Spirit, takes place therein. And now we can perform, through God, what to man was impossible. Now we can order our conversation aright. We can do all things in the light and power of that love, through Christ which strengtheneth us. We now have 'the testimony of our conscience,'

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thinks, however, that after his return from his studies at Jerusalem under Gamaliel, who encouraged Greek learning, he probably 'used the facilities afforded by his native city for studying the Gentile thought of the day.' Gamaliel the elder was the grandson of the famous Hillel, and a member of the Sanhedrin.

He was an open-minded, liberal man, and showed a sympathy for Greek learning and literature which was rare amongst the Rabbis of his time.

All this is rather beside the mark. All that St. Paul means is that in his proceedings at Corinth he was not actuated by motives of mere human prudence and self-seeking.

which we could never have by fleshly wisdom, 'that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have our conversation in the world.'

16. This is properly the ground of a Christian's joy. We may now therefore readily conceive, how he that hath this testimony in himself rejoiceth evermore. 'My soul,' may he say, 'doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour.' I rejoice in Him, who, of His own unmerited love, of His own free and tender mercy, 'hath called me into this state of salvation,' wherein, through His power, I now stand. I rejoice, because His Spirit beareth witness to my spirit, that I am bought with the blood of the Lamb; and that, believing in Him, 'I am a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.' I rejoice, because the sense of God's love to me hath, by the same Spirit, wrought in me to love Him, and to love for His sake every child of man, every soul that He hath made. I rejoice, because He gives me to feel in myself 'the mind that was in Christ': simplicity, a single eye to Him in every motion of my heart, power always to fix the loving eye of my soul on Him who 'loved me, and gave Himself for me', to aim at Him alone, at His glorious will, in all I think, or speak, or do: purity, desiring nothing more but God, 'crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts'; 'setting my affections on things above, not on things of the earth' holiness, a recovery of the image of God, a renewal of soul 'after His likeness' and godly sincerity, directing all my words and works, so as to conduce to His glory. In this I likewise rejoice, yea, and will rejoice, because my conscience beareth me witness in the Holy Ghost, by the light He continually pours in upon it, that I 'walk worthy of the vocation wherewith I am called', that I 'abstain from all appearance of evil,' fleeing from sin as from the face of a serpent; that as

16. The word used in the text does not mean 'joy,' but rather 'glorying, confident assertion.' All that Wesley says is true; but it has little or nothing to do with his text.

'Abstain from all *appearance* of

evil.' This is an unfortunate and misleading translation. The Greek word is *εἶδος*, corresponding to the Latin 'species'; and the papyri abundantly show that it means 'class, sort, kind.'

I have opportunity I do all possible good, in every kind, to all men ; that I follow my Lord in all my steps, and do what is acceptable in His sight. I rejoice, because I both see and feel, through the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit, that all my works are wrought in Him, yea, and that it is He who worketh all my works in me. I rejoice in seeing through the light of God, which shines in my heart, that I have power to walk in His ways ; and that, through His grace, I turn not therefrom, to the right hand or to the left.

17. Such is the ground and the nature of that joy whereby an adult Christian rejoiceth evermore. And from all this we may easily infer, first, that this is not a *natural* joy. It does not arise from any natural cause not from any sudden flow of spirits. This may give a transient start of joy ; but the Christian *rejoiceth always*. It cannot be owing to bodily health or ease, to strength and soundness of constitution for it is equally strong in sickness and pain, yea, perhaps far stronger than before. Many Christians have never experienced any joy, to be compared with that which then filled their soul, when the body was wellnigh worn out with pain, or consumed away with pining sickness. Least of all can it be ascribed to outward prosperity, to the favour of men, or plenty of worldly goods ; for then, chiefly, when their faith has been tried as with fire, by all manner of outward afflictions, have the children of God rejoiced in Him, whom unseen they loved, even with joy unspeakable. And never surely did men rejoice like those who were used as 'the filth and offscouring of the world', who wandered to and fro, being in want of all things ; in hunger, in cold, in nakedness ; who had trials, not only of

17. 'An *adult* Christian'—an important qualification. The New Testament distinguishes between 'babes in Christ,' 'young men,' and 'full-grown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil.' In *Minutes*, 1745, it is stated that inward sanctification begins 'in the moment we are justified. The seed of every virtue is then sown in the

soul. From that time the believer gradually dies to sin and grows in grace. Yet sin remains in him ; yea, the seed of all sin, till he is sanctified throughout in spirit, soul, and body.' See the note at the end of this sermon in the 1771 edition: 'The preceding discourse describes the experience of those that are *strong* in faith.' The word 'adult' was inserted in the edition of 1771.

'cruel mockings,' but, 'moreover of bonds and imprisonments'; yea, who, at last, 'counted not their lives dear unto themselves, so they might finish their course with joy.'

18. From the preceding considerations, we may, secondly, infer, that the joy of a Christian does not arise from any blindness of conscience, from his not being able to discern good from evil. So far from it, that he was an utter stranger to this joy, till the eyes of his understanding were opened, that he knew it not, until he had spiritual senses, fitted to discern spiritual good and evil. And now the eye of his soul waxeth not dim: he was never so sharp-sighted before: he has so quick a perception of the smallest things, as is quite amazing to the natural man. As a mote is visible in the sunbeam, so to him who is walking in the light, in the beams of the uncreated Sun, every mote of sin is visible. Nor does he close the eyes of his conscience any more: that sleep is departed from him.

His soul is always broad awake: no more slumber or folding of the hands to rest! He is always standing on the tower, and hearkening what his Lord will say concerning him; and always rejoicing in this very thing, in 'seeing Him that is invisible.'

19. Neither does the joy of a Christian arise, thirdly, from any dullness or callousness of conscience. A kind of joy, it is true, may arise from this, in those whose 'foolish hearts are darkened'; whose heart is callous, unfeeling, dull of sense, and consequently, without spiritual understanding. Because of their senseless, unfeeling hearts, they may rejoice even in committing sin; and this they may probably call *liberty*!—which is indeed mere drunkenness of soul, a fatal numbness of spirit, the stupid insensibility of a seared conscience. On the contrary, a Christian has the most exquisite sensibility; such as he could not have conceived before. He never had such a

19. 'Liberty.' Wesley is thinking of the Antinomians, like Roger Ball, Mr. Green, William Cudworth, and Stephen Timmins, who were causing him a great deal of trouble about this time; putting 'gospel heads on bodies ready to indulge every unholy temper.'

The quotation is the tenth verse of the hymn in *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, 1742, entitled 'Watch in all Things' (2 Tim. iv. 5). It begins 'Jesu, my Saviour, Brother, Friend,' and is divided in the Methodist Hymn-Book into Hymns 445 and 446.



tenderness of conscience as he has had since the love of God has reigned in his heart. And this also is his glory and joy, that God hath heard his daily prayer

O that my tender soul might fly  
The first abhorr'd approach of ill ;  
Quick as the apple of an eye,  
The slightest touch of sin to feel.

20. To conclude. Christian joy is joy in obedience, joy in loving God, and keeping His commandments: and yet not in keeping them as if we were thereby to fulfil the terms of the covenant of works; as if by any works or righteousness of ours we were to procure pardon and acceptance with God. Not so: we are already pardoned and accepted through the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. Not as if we were by our own obedience to procure life, life from the death of sin this also we have already through the grace of God. Us 'hath He quickened, who were dead in sins'; and now we are 'alive to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' But we rejoice in walking according to the covenant of grace, in holy love and happy obedience. We rejoice in knowing that, 'being justified through His grace,' we have 'not received that grace of God in vain', that God having freely (not for the sake of our willing or running, but through the blood of the Lamb) reconciled us to Himself, we run, in the strength which He hath given us, the way of His commandments. He hath 'girded us with strength unto the war,' and we gladly 'fight the good fight of faith.' We rejoice, through Him who liveth in our hearts by faith, to 'lay hold of eternal life.' This is our rejoicing, that as our 'Father worketh hitherto,' so (not by our own might or wisdom, but through the power of His Spirit, freely given in Christ Jesus) we also work the works of God. And may He work in us whatsoever is well-pleasing in His sight! To whom be the praise for ever and ever!

In the edition of 1771 Wesley adds a note here: 'It may easily be observed that the preceding discourse describes the experience of those that are *strong* in faith; but hereby those that are *weak* in faith may be discouraged; to prevent which, the following discourse, may be of use'—i.e. Sermon XLVI, on Sin in Believers.

## SERMON XII

### THE MEANS OF GRACE

THIS fine sermon was written as an antidote to the infection of 'stillness' which came upon the Societies in 1739. In the preface to the second part of the *Journal* Wesley says, 'About September 1739, while my brother and I were absent, certain men crept in among them unawares, greatly troubling and subverting their souls.' They taught that the members would never get a clean heart 'till you leave off using the means of grace, so called; till you leave off running to church and sacrament, and praying, and singing, and reading either the Bible or any other book; for you cannot use these things without trusting in them.' The chief agent in this movement was Philip Henry Molther, a Moravian missionary, who arrived in London on October 18, 1739, and at once joined the Fetter Lane Society. On December 31 Wesley had a long conversation with him, and set down the summary of his views; he taught, *inter alia*, that the way to faith is to wait on Christ and be still; that is, not to use the means of grace; not to go to church; not to communicate; not to fast; not to use so much private prayer; not to read the Scripture; because it is impossible for a man to use them without trusting in them. Spangenberg came to London about the same time and joined with Molther; and between them they converted to their 'stillness' several of the Methodists, including Brown, Bowers, George Bell, John Bray, and John Simpson. Even Charles Wesley was affected, and on January 22, 1741, he stopped preaching and said he intended to preach no more. The fit only lasted about three weeks; but it occasioned John much anxiety. Gambold, Westley Hall, and Benjamin Ingham embraced the same error.

John Wesley at once attacked this mischievous form of Mysticism. On November 15, 1739, 'I exhorted four or five thousand people at Bristol neither to neglect nor rest in the means of grace'; and on the 19th 'I exhorted the society to wait upon God in all His ordinances.' This was doubtless substantially the present sermon. He took up the several points in detail in his expositions to the society at Fetter Lane in June 1740, speaking on the 24th on 'Why are ye yet subject to ordinances?' on the 25th on 'All scripture is given

by inspiration of God'; on the 26th on 'Search the Scriptures'; and on the 27th and 28th on the Lord's Supper. The result was that he and his followers left the Fetter Lane Society on July 20, and met at the Foundery on the 23rd; so providentially shaking off the Moravian connexion, which would have been a great obstacle to Wesley's work.

It must be remembered that the sermon was addressed to those who were seeking the Lord, and had not yet received the witness of the Spirit; it was these whom the Moravians exhorted to 'stillness,' not the assured believers. The only point that may be said to be still open to discussion is whether unconverted men, who are seeking salvation, should be admitted to the Lord's Supper; as we shall see, Wesley strongly held that they should be encouraged to communicate, and should take every opportunity of doing so.

The whole of the fourth part of the *Journal*, which was published in 1744, should be read in this connexion; and the two hymns by Charles Wesley which are appended to it. The first, on The Means of Grace, beginning 'Long have I seemed to serve Thee, Lord,' was first published in *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, 1740 (*Collected Works*, i. 233). Fifteen of its twenty-three verses were in the 1876 Hymn-Book as Hymns 91 and 92. The second was republished in *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1749), 95, 'The Bloody Issue Cured' (*Collected Works*, iv. 251). Both emphasize the teaching of the sermon—that the means of grace are necessary, but that the sinner must not trust in them but in Christ.

As to the text, I have only found one reference to it; on June 22, 1741, Wesley allowed his Bible to open casually, and it opened at Mal. iii., which he forthwith proceeded to expound. But many texts would equally fit the sermon, and I imagine it was preached very often in substance in the years 1739-46.

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*Ye are gone away from Mine ordinances, and have not kept them.*

—MAL. iii. 7.

I. 1. BUT are there any *ordinances* now, since life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel? Are there, under the Christian dispensation, any *means ordained* of God, as the usual channels of His grace? This question could never have been proposed in the apostolical church, unless by one who openly avowed himself to be a Heathen, the whole body of Christians being agreed, that Christ had ordained certain outward means, for conveying His grace into the souls of men. Their constant practice set this beyond all dispute;

for so long as 'all that believed were together, and had all things common' (Acts ii. 44), 'they continued steadfastly in the teaching of the Apostles, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers' (verse 42).

2. But in process of time, when 'the love of many waxed cold,' some began to mistake the *means* for the *end*, and to place religion, rather in doing those outward works, than in a heart renewed after the image of God. They forgot that 'the end of' every 'commandment is love, out of a pure heart,' with 'faith unfeigned': the loving the Lord their God with all their heart, and their neighbour as themselves: and the being purified from pride, anger, and evil desire, by a 'faith of the operation of God.' Others seemed to imagine, that though religion did not principally consist in these outward means, yet there was something in them wherewith God was well pleased; something that would still make them acceptable in His sight, though they were not exact in the weightier matters of the law, in justice, mercy, and the love of God.

3. It is evident, in those who abused them thus, they did not conduce to the end for which they were ordained: rather, the things which should have been for their health, were to them an occasion of falling. They were so far from receiving any blessing therein, that they only drew down a curse upon their head; so far from growing more heavenly in heart and life, that they were twofold more the children of hell than before. Others, clearly perceiving that these means did not convey the grace of God to those children of the devil, began, from this particular case, to draw a general conclusion,—that they were not means of conveying the grace of God.

4. Yet the number of those who *abused* the ordinances of God was far greater than of those who *despised* them, till certain men arose, not only of great understanding (sometimes

I. Par. 1. Wesley might have made even more of the passage he quotes; it runs, 'And they continued steadfastly in the teaching of the apostles, and in the fellowship'—curious that the founder of the class-meeting should have left this

out—'in the breaking of the bread,' i.e. the Lord's Supper, 'and in the prayers,' i.e. the common worship.

4. The reference is to the Mystics of the ancient Church—such as the hermits St. Antony and St. Macarius; the Latins St. Ambrose and St. Bene-

joined with considerable learning), but who likewise appeared to be men of love, experimentally acquainted with true, inward religion. Some of these were burning and shining lights, persons famous in their generations, and such as had well deserved of the Church of Christ, for standing in the gap against the overflowings of ungodliness.

It cannot be supposed, that these holy and venerable men intended any more, at first, than to show that outward religion is nothing worth, without the religion of the heart ; that ' God is a Spirit, and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth ' ; that, therefore, external worship is lost

dict, the pseudo-Dionysius, St. Gregory the Great ; the mediaevals Master Eckhart, Jean Gerson, St. Theresa and her disciple St. John of the Cross ; Thomas à Kempis and John Tauler ; and later still, Molinos and Madame Guyon. These all taught that the highest form of Christian experience was the ecstatic rapture and vision of God attained by ' pure ' prayer and contemplation, all outward helps being as far as possible discarded. Wesley made acquaintance with them at Oxford, and studied them further whilst he was in Georgia, and he was at first greatly drawn to their teaching. On March 4, 1736, he read the *Lives* of Tauler and Boehm, the latter of whom especially attracted him. Writing in 1773 to Miss Bishop, he says, ' There are excellent things in most of the Mystic writers. As almost all of them lived in the Romish Church, they were lights whom the gracious providence of God raised up to shine in a dark place. But they did not give a clear, a steady, or a uniform light. Madam Guyon was a good woman, and is a fine writer, but very far from judicious. Her writings will lead any one who is fond of them into unscriptural Quietism.' But he had little patience with the

developments of Mysticism in the works of Jacob Behmen, the later writings of William Law, and Thomas Hartley's *Paradise Restored*. Writing to the last of these in 1764, he says, ' I cannot but bewail your vehement attachment to the Mystic writers ; with whom I conversed much for several years, and whom I then admired, perhaps more than you do now. But I found at length an absolute necessity of giving up either them or the Bible.' In his *Journal*, February 5, 1764, he says of the Mystics, ' They slight not only works of piety, the ordinances of God, but even works of mercy.' In his letter to William Law in 1756 he quotes him as saying, ' Seek for help no other way, neither from men nor books ; but wholly leave yourself to God ' ; and remarks, ' How can a man " leave himself wholly to God," in the total neglect of His ordinances ? The old Bible way is to " leave ourselves wholly to God " in the constant use of all the means He hath ordained.' On the same grounds he objected to Quakerism, because it set aside ordination and the sacraments, and taught that all worship other than that to which a man is directly moved by the Spirit is abominable idolatry.

labour, without a heart devoted to God, that the outward ordinances of God then profit much, when they advance inward holiness; but, when they advance it not, are unprofitable and void, are lighter than vanity; yea, that when they are used, as it were, *in the place of* this, they are an utter abomination to the Lord.

5. Yet it is not strange, if some of these, being strongly convinced of that horrid profanation of the ordinances of God, which had spread itself over the whole Church, and wellnigh driven true religion out of the world, in their fervent zeal for the glory of God, and the recovery of souls from that fatal delusion, spake as if outward religion were absolutely nothing, as if it had no place in the religion of Christ. It is not surprising at all, if they should not always have expressed themselves with sufficient caution; so that unwary hearers might believe they condemned all outward means, as altogether unprofitable, and as not designed of God to be the ordinary channels of conveying His grace into the souls of men.

Nay, it is not impossible, some of these holy men did, at length, themselves fall into this opinion: in particular those who, not by choice, but by the providence of God, were cut off from all these ordinances, perhaps wandering up and down, having no certain abiding-place, or dwelling in dens and caves of the earth. These, experiencing the grace of God in themselves, though they were deprived of all outward means, might infer that the same grace would be given to them who of set purpose abstained from them.

6. And experience shows how easily this notion spreads, and insinuates itself into the minds of men; especially of those who are thoroughly awakened out of the sleep of death, and begin to feel the weight of their sins a burden too heavy to be borne. These are usually impatient of their present state, and, trying every way to escape from it, they are always ready to catch at any new thing, any new proposal of ease or happiness. They have probably tried most outward means, and found no ease in them: it may be, more and more of remorse, and fear, and sorrow, and condemnation. It is easy, therefore, to persuade these that it is better for them to abstain from all

those means. They are already weary of striving (as it seems) in vain, of labouring in the fire ; and are therefore glad of any pretence to cast aside that wherein their soul has no pleasure, to give over the painful strife, and sink down into an indolent inactivity.

II. 1. In the following discourse, I propose to examine at large whether there are any means of grace.

By ' means of grace,' I understand outward signs, words, or actions, ordained of God, and appointed for this end, to be the ordinary channels whereby He might convey to men, preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace.

I use this expression, ' means of grace,' because I know none better, and because it has been generally used in the Christian Church for many ages—in particular by our own Church, which directs us to bless God both for the means of grace, and hope of glory, and teaches us, that a sacrament is ' an outward sign of inward grace, and a means whereby we receive the same.'

The chief of these means are prayer, whether in secret or with the great congregation ; searching the Scriptures (which implies reading, hearing, and meditating thereon), and receiving the Lord's supper, eating bread and drinking wine in remembrance of Him, and these we believe to be ordained of God, as the ordinary channels of conveying His grace to the souls of men.

II. 1. ' Preventing,' i.e. prevenient, going before conversion.

' Means of grace ' ; the old ecclesiastical phrase is ' media gratiae.' The quotations are from the General Thanksgiving, which was composed by Bishop Reynolds and first appears in the Prayer-Book of 1662 ; and from the Catechism, where the definition in full is ' An outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us, ordained by Christ Himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof.'

Baptism is naturally omitted in this list, because practically all those of whom Wesley was thinking had already been baptized in infancy. Considering the large part which singing played both in his private devotions and his public services (see index to Standard edition of the *Journal*, s.v.), it is surprising that he does not mention praise as one of the means of grace ; but no doubt he included it under prayer. The omission of Christian fellowship is less easy to understand.

2. But we allow, that the whole value of the means depends on their actual subservience to the end of religion, that, consequently, all these means, when separate from the end, are less than nothing and vanity; that if they do not actually conduce to the knowledge and love of God, they are not acceptable in His sight; yea, rather, they are an abomination before Him, a stink in His nostrils, He is weary to bear them. Above all, if they are used as a kind of *commutation* for the religion they were designed to subserve, it is not easy to find words for the enormous folly and wickedness of thus turning God's arms against Himself; of keeping Christianity out of the heart by those very means which were ordained for the bringing it in.

3. We allow, likewise, that all outward means whatever, if separate from the Spirit of God, cannot profit at all, cannot conduce, in any degree, either to the knowledge or love of God. Without controversy, the help that is done upon earth, He doeth it Himself. It is He alone who, by His own almighty power, worketh in us what is pleasing in His sight, and all outward things, unless He work in them and by them, are mere weak and beggarly elements. Whosoever, therefore, imagines there is any intrinsic power in any means whatsoever, does greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures, neither the power of God. We know that there is no inherent power in the words that are spoken in prayer, in the letter of Scripture read, the sound thereof heard, or the bread and wine received in the Lord's supper; but that it is God alone who is the Giver of every good gift, the Author of all grace; that the whole power is of Him, whereby, through any of these, there is any blessing conveyed to our souls. We know, likewise, that He is able to give the same grace, though there were no means on the face of the earth. In this sense, we may affirm, that, with regard to God, there is no such thing as means, seeing He is equally able to work whatsoever pleaseth Him, by any, or by none at all.

4. We allow farther, that the use of all means whatever will never atone for one sin; that it is the blood of Christ alone, whereby any sinner can be reconciled to God, there



being no other propitiation for our sins, no other fountain for sin and uncleanness. Every believer in Christ is deeply convinced that there is no merit but in Him; that there is no merit in any of his own works, not in uttering the prayer, or searching the Scripture, or hearing the Word of God, or eating of that bread and drinking of that cup. So that if no more be intended by the expression some have used, 'Christ is the only means of grace,' than this,—that He is the only meritorious cause of it, it cannot be gainsaid by any who know the grace of God.

5. Yet once more we allow, though it is a melancholy truth, that a large proportion of those who are called Christians, do to this day abuse the means of grace to the destruction of their souls. This is doubtless the case with all those who rest content in the form of godliness, without the power. Either they fondly presume they are Christians already, because they do thus and thus (although Christ was never yet revealed in their hearts, nor the love of God shed abroad therein), or else they suppose they shall infallibly be so, barely because they use these means, idly dreaming (though perhaps hardly conscious thereof), either that there is some kind of *power* therein, whereby, sooner or later (they know not when), they shall certainly be made holy, or that there is a sort of *merit* in using them, which will surely move God to give them holiness, or accept them without it.

6. So little do they understand that great foundation of the whole Christian building, 'By grace are ye saved' ye are saved from your sins, from the guilt and power thereof, ye are restored to the favour and image of God, not for any works, merits, or deservings of yours, but by the free grace, the mere mercy of God, through the merits of His well-beloved Son: ye are thus saved, not by any power, wisdom, or strength, which is in you, or in any other creature, but merely through

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4. 'Some have used.' On April 25, 1740, the two Wesleys interviewed Molther; who amongst other things said, 'That those who have not a clean heart ought not to use the

means of grace (particularly not to communicate); because they are not means of grace—there being no such thing as means of grace but Christ only.'

the grace or power of the Holy Ghost, which worketh all in all.

7. But the main question remains : ' We know this salvation is the gift and the work of God , but how (may one say who is convinced he hath it not) may I attain thereto ? ' If you say, ' Believe, and thou shalt be saved ! ' he answers, ' True ; but how shall I believe ? ' You reply, ' Wait upon God.' ' Well ; but how am I to wait ? In the means of grace, or out of them ? Am I to wait for the grace of God which bringeth salvation, by using these means, or by laying them aside ? '

8. It cannot possibly be conceived, that the Word of God should give no direction in so important a point , or, that the Son of God, who came down from heaven for us men and for our salvation, should have left us undetermined with regard to a question wherein our salvation is so nearly concerned.

And, in fact, He hath not left us undetermined , He hath shown us the way wherein we should go. We have only to consult the oracles of God , to inquire what is written there , and, if we simply abide by their decision, there can no possible doubt remain.

III. 1. According to this, according to the decision of holy writ, all who desire the grace of God are to wait for it in the means which He hath ordained ; in using, not in laying them aside.

And, first, all who desire the grace of God are to wait for it in the way of prayer. This is the express direction of our Lord Himself. In His Sermon upon the Mount, after explaining at large wherein religion consists, and describing the main branches of it, He adds, ' Ask, and it shall be given you , seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you for every one that asketh receiveth , and he that seeketh findeth ; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened ' (Matt. vii. 7, 8). Here we are in the plainest manner directed to ask, in order to, or as a means of, receiving , to seek, in order to

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8. The Nicene Creed says of our Lord, ' Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven.'

find, the grace of God, the pearl of great price, and to knock, to continue asking and seeking, if we would enter into His kingdom.

2. That no doubt might remain, our Lord labours this point in a more peculiar manner. He appeals to every man's own heart 'What man is there of you, who, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or, if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven,' the Father of angels and men, the Father of the spirits of all flesh, 'give good things to them that ask Him?' (verses 9-11). Or, as He expresses Himself on another occasion, including all good things in one, 'How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?' (Luke xi. 13). It should be particularly observed here, that the persons directed to ask had not then received the Holy Spirit: nevertheless our Lord directs them to use this means, and promises that it should be effectual; that upon asking they should receive the Holy Spirit, from Him whose mercy is over all His works.

3. The absolute necessity of using this means, if we would receive any gift from God, yet farther appears from that remarkable passage which immediately precedes these words: 'And He said unto them,' whom He had just been teaching how to pray, 'Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and shall say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves: and he from within shall answer, Trouble me not; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you' (Luke xi. 5, 7-9). 'Though he will not give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.' How could our blessed Lord more plainly declare, that we may receive of God, by this means, by importunately asking, what otherwise we should not receive at all?

4. 'He spake also another parable, to this end, that men

ought always to pray, and not to faint,' till through this means they should receive of God whatsoever petition they asked of Him: 'There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of my adversary. And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me' (Luke xviii. 1-5). The application of this our Lord Himself hath made: 'Hear what the unjust judge saith!' Because she continues to ask, because she will take no denial, therefore I will avenge her. 'And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him? I tell you He will avenge them speedily,' if they pray, and faint not.

5. A direction, equally full and express, to wait for the blessings of God in private prayer, together with a positive promise that, by this means, we shall obtain the request of our lips, He hath given us in those well-known words: 'Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly' (Matt. vi. 6).

6. If it be possible for any direction to be more clear, it is that which God hath given us by the Apostle, with regard to prayer of every kind, public or private, and the blessing annexed thereto: 'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally' (if they ask; otherwise 'ye have not, because ye ask not,' Jas. iv. 2), 'and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him' (Jas. i. 5).

If it be objected, 'But this is no direction to unbelievers, to them who know not the pardoning grace of God' for the Apostle adds, "But let him ask in faith", otherwise, "let him not think that he shall receive anything of the Lord" I answer, The meaning of the word *faith*, in this place, is fixed by the Apostle himself, as if it were on purpose to obviate this objection, in the words immediately following: 'Let him

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III. 6. The use of *διακρίνεσθαι* in the N.T. and later Christian writings; but it naturally arises from the sense of 'doubt' is confined to

ask in faith, nothing wavering,' nothing *doubting*, μηδὲν διακρινόμενος: not doubting but God heareth his prayer, and will fulfil the desire of his heart.

The gross, blasphemous absurdity of supposing *faith*, in this place, to be taken in the full Christian meaning, appears hence: it is supposing the Holy Ghost to direct a man who knows he has not this faith (which is here termed *wisdom*), to ask it of God, with a positive promise that 'it shall be given him'; and then immediately to subjoin, that it shall not be given him, unless he have it before he asks for it! But who can bear such a supposition? From this scripture, therefore, as well as those cited above, we must infer, that all who desire the grace of God are to wait for it in the way of prayer.

7. Secondly. All who desire the grace of God are to wait for it in searching the Scriptures.

Our Lord's direction, with regard to the use of this means, is likewise plain and clear. 'Search the Scriptures,' saith He to the unbelieving Jews, 'for they testify of Me' (John v. 39). And for this very end did He direct them to search the Scriptures, that they might believe in Him.

The objection, that 'this is not a command, but only an assertion, that they did search the Scriptures,' is shamelessly false. I desire those who urge it, to let us know how a command can be more clearly expressed, than in those terms,

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the more literal meaning 'to make a distinction.' It may mean either to make a distinction in the objects of prayer, as that one is legitimate and another not; or to make distinction, or to be divided, in one's own mind, to be of divided soul (cf. Jas. i. 8).

Certainly faith is here used in its general sense, and not as equivalent to saving faith; but it is not quite exact to say that wisdom here means saving faith. It is true that to St. James, as J. B. Mayor says, 'Wisdom is the principal thing, to which he gives the same prominence as St. Paul to faith, St. John to love,

St. Peter to hope'; but in this passage the context shows that the wisdom to be asked for is that which enables the Christian to understand the use of trial. But Wesley need not have been abusive; it is hard to see how this misinterpretation can be described as 'blasphemous.'

7. 'Search the Scriptures.' Wesley is himself too peremptory in his condemnation of the alternative rendering 'Ye search the Scriptures' as shamelessly false. As every one knows, the indicative second person plural is identical in form with the imperative; so that the context alone can decide which is intended.

Ἐρευνᾶτε τὰς γραφάς. It is as peremptory as so many words can make it.

And what a blessing from God attends the use of this means, appears from what is recorded concerning the Bereans who, after hearing St. Paul, 'searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed,'—found the grace of God, in the way which He had ordained (Acts xvii. 11, 12).

It is probable, indeed, that in some of those who had 'received the word with all readiness of mind,' 'faith came,' as the same Apostle speaks, 'by hearing,' and was only confirmed by reading the Scriptures but it was observed above, that, under the general term of searching the Scriptures, both hearing, reading, and meditating are contained.

8. And that this is a means whereby God not only gives, but also confirms and increases, true wisdom, we learn from the words of St. Paul to Timothy 'From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus' (2 Tim. iii. 15). The same truth (namely, that this is the great means God has ordained for conveying His manifold grace to man) is delivered, in the fullest manner that can be conceived, in the words which immediately follow 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God', consequently, all Scripture is infallibly

Now, the point of the argument is that the Jews search the scriptures which really testify of Christ; but in spite of this they will not come to Christ. They *think* that they have eternal life in the Scriptures; but it is only from Christ that they can *have* life. There was no need to exhort them to search the Scriptures; they already did it with meticulous care. Practically all the modern commentators prefer the indicative rendering; and it is adopted in the R.V. The outstanding weakness of Wesley as an interpreter of the Scriptures is his disregard of the context; he takes

just the words of the particular passage he is considering without reference to what precedes or follows; and so often falls into error, as in this and the preceding case. His warmth of denunciation of those who do not agree with him he probably learned from the commentators on the classics, who abused their opponents with all the freedom and vigour of fish-wives; and besides, he was feeling very indignant with the people who had made such trouble with their Quietism in his societies.

8. The alternative rendering, which is adopted by the R.V., 'Every scripture inspired of God is also

true, 'and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness'; to the end 'that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works' (verses 16, 17).

9. It should be observed, that this is spoken primarily and directly of the Scriptures which Timothy had known from a child, which must have been those of the Old Testament, for the New was not then wrote. How far then was St. Paul (though he was 'not a whit behind the very chief of the Apostles,' nor, therefore, I presume, behind any man now upon earth) from making light of the Old Testament! Behold this, lest ye one day 'wonder and perish,' ye who make so small account of one half of the oracles of God! Yea, and that half of which the Holy Ghost expressly declares, that it is 'profitable,' as a means ordained of God for this very thing, 'for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness'; to the end, 'the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.'

10. Nor is this profitable only for the men of God, for those who walk already in the light of His countenance, but also for those who are yet in darkness, seeking Him whom they

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profitable,' &c., does not affect the argument of the paragraph, except as regards the interpolated parenthesis, 'Consequently, all scripture is infallibly true.' Wesley believed this in the strictest sense. In *Journal*, August 24, 1776, he says, 'If there be any mistakes in the Bible, there may as well be a thousand. If there be one falsehood in that Book, it did not come from the God of truth.' At the same time, he allows the function of reason in the interpretation of the Bible. In Sermon LXX, i. 6, he says, 'Is it not reason (assisted by the Holy Ghost) which enables us to understand what the Scriptures declare?' and in Sermon CXXXVI he directs that we must

'put no unnatural interpretation upon it, but take the known phrases in their common obvious sense.' Moreover, he is not foolish enough to suppose (as some of his followers have done) that the A.V. is infallible. Indeed in *Journal*, September 14, 1785, he criticizes adversely the A.V. rendering of Ps. lxxiv. 12, and adds, 'Many such emendations there are in this translation; one would think King James had made them himself!'

9. A seasonable observation. It is often forgotten that all that is said in the New Testament in regard to the authority and inspiration of the Scriptures refers to the Old Testament only.

know not. Thus St. Peter : ' We have also a more sure word of prophecy ' : literally, ' And we have the prophetic word more sure ' : *Καὶ ἔχομεν βεβαιότερον τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον* : confirmed by our being ' eye-witnesses of His majesty,' and ' hearing the voice which came from the excellent glory,' ' unto which '—prophetic word ; so he styles the holy Scriptures—' ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the Day-star arise in your hearts ' (2 Pet. i. 19). Let all therefore who desire that day to dawn upon their hearts, wait for it in searching the Scriptures.

II. Thirdly. All who desire an increase of the grace of God are to wait for it in partaking of the Lord's supper ; for this also is a direction Himself hath given : ' The same night in which He was betrayed He took bread, and brake it, and said, Take, eat : this is My Body ' , that is, the sacred sign of My body : ' this do in remembrance of Me.' Likewise ' He took the cup, saying, This cup is the new testament,' or covenant, ' in My blood ' , the sacred sign of that covenant ' this do ye in remembrance of Me. For as often as ye eat this

10. This interpretation of the passage in 2 Pet. i. 19 is adopted by J. B. Mayor, in preference to Alford's, that the prophetic word is a surer basis for faith than the transfiguration.

11. In *Journal*, June 27, 1740, Wesley says : ' In latter times many have affirmed that the Lord's Supper is not a converting, but a confirming ordinance. And among us it has been diligently taught that none but those who are converted, who have received the Holy Ghost, who are believers in the full sense, ought to communicate. But experience shows the gross falsehood of that assertion that the Lord's Supper is not a converting ordinance. Ye are the witnesses. For many now present know, the very beginning of your conversion to God was

wrought at the Lord's Supper. Now, one single instance of this kind overthrows the whole assertion.' On the next day he showed at large ' (1) That the Lord's Supper was ordained by God to be a means of conveying to men either preventing, or justifying, or sanctifying grace, according to their several necessities. (2) That the persons for whom it was ordained are all those who know and feel that they want the grace of God. (3) That there is no previous preparation indispensably necessary, but a desire to receive whatever He pleases to give. And (4) That no fitness is required at the time of communicating, but a sense of our state, of our utter sinfulness and helplessness.' These views he defends in his *Answer to Mr. Church*, iii. 3 (1744-5), and his letter to the



bread, and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death till He come' (1 Cor. xi. 23, &c.) ye openly exhibit the same, by these visible signs, before God, and angels, and men, ye manifest your solemn remembrance of His death, till He cometh in the clouds of heaven.

Only 'let a man' first 'examine himself,' whether he understand the nature and design of this holy institution, and whether he really desire to be himself made conformable to the death of Christ; and so, nothing doubting, 'let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup' (verse 28).

Here, then, the direction first given by our Lord is expressly repeated by the Apostle: 'Let him eat; let him drink' (ἐσθιέτω, πινέτω, both in the imperative mood), words not implying a bare permission only, but a clear, explicit command; a command to all those who either already are filled with peace and joy in believing, or can truly say, 'The remembrance of our sins is grievous unto us, the burden of them is intolerable.'

12. And that this is also an ordinary, stated means of receiving the grace of God, is evident from those words of the Apostle which occur in the preceding chapter: 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion,' or *communi-*

Bishop of London, i. 10, 11 (1747). When, after Wesley's death, it had been decided, under the Plan of Pacification of 1795, that the Lord's Supper could be administered by Methodist preachers, if the majority of the trustees and of the stewards and leaders desired it, it was resolved in 1796, 'No person shall be suffered to partake of the Lord's Supper among us, unless he be a member of our society, or receive a note of admission from the assistant,' and this was reaffirmed by the Conference of 1889. As any one may become a member of the Methodist Church who has 'a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and be saved from his sins,' this rule is

quite in accord with Wesley's teaching; and the empowering of the assistant, or minister, to admit any one whom he thinks fit, removes any possible obstacle to an unconverted but penitent person partaking of the Lord's Supper. Indeed, it is usual for the minister to invite both members of other churches and sincere seekers after God to join in the observance of this Sacrament.

The last line of the paragraph is appropriately quoted from the General Confession in the Order for Holy Communion; in the Methodist form of the service the concluding words ('the burden of them is intolerable') are omitted.

cation, 'of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?' (1 Cor. x. 16). Is not the eating of that bread, and the drinking of that cup, the outward, visible means whereby God conveys into our souls all that spiritual grace, that righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, which were purchased by the body of Christ once broken, and the blood of Christ once shed for us? Let all, therefore, who truly desire the grace of God, eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

IV 1. But as plainly as God hath pointed out the way wherein He will be inquired after, innumerable are the objections which men, wise in their own eyes, have from time to time raised against it. It may be needful to consider a few of these, not because they are of weight in themselves, but because they have so often been used, especially of late years, to turn the lame out of the way; yea, to trouble and subvert those who did run well, till Satan appeared as an angel of light.

The first and chief of these is, 'You cannot use these means (as you call them) without *trusting* in them.' I pray, where is this written? I expect you should show me plain Scripture for your assertion: otherwise I dare not receive it, because I am not convinced that you are wiser than God.

If it really had been as you assert, it is certain Christ must have known it. And if He had known it, He would surely have warned us; He would have revealed it long ago. Therefore, because He has not, because there is no tittle of this in the whole revelation of Jesus Christ, I am as fully assured your assertion is false, as that this revelation is of God.

'However, leave them off for a short time, to see whether you trusted in them or no.' So I am to disobey God, in order

12. Wesley's interpretation is sound, as far as it goes; but it omits what the context expressly emphasizes, that in partaking of the bread we enter into union, not only with Christ, but with one another, by virtue of our common union with Him.

IV. 1. 'Of late years': the reference is to Molther and his Quietist followers. See introduction above.

'Damnation': the Greek word means 'condemnation,' not 'damnation' in the modern sense.

to know whether I trust in obeying Him ! And do you avow this advice ? Do you deliberately teach to ' do evil, that good may come ' ? O tremble at the sentence of God against such teachers ! Their ' damnation is just.'

' Nay, if you are troubled when you leave them off, it is plain you trusted in them.' By no means. If I am troubled when I wilfully disobey God, it is plain His Spirit is still striving with me, but if I am not troubled at wilful sin, it is plain I am given up to a reprobate mind.

But what do you mean by '*trusting* in them' ?—looking for the blessing of God therein ? believing, that if I wait in this way, I shall attain what otherwise I should not ? So I do. And so I will, God being my helper, even to my life's end. By the grace of God, I will *thus* trust in them, till the day of my death, that is, I will believe, that whatever God hath promised, He is faithful also to perform. And seeing He hath promised to bless me in this way, I *trust* it shall be accord-ing to His word.

2. It has been, secondly, objected, ' This is seeking salvation by works.' Do you know the meaning of the expression you use ? What is seeking salvation by works ? In the writings of St. Paul, it means, either seeking to be saved by observing the ritual works of the Mosaic law ; or expecting salvation for the sake of our own works, by the merit of our own righteousness. But how is either of these implied in my waiting in the way God has ordained, and expecting that He will meet me there, because He has promised so to do ?

I do expect that He will fulfil His word, that He will meet and bless me in this way. Yet not for the sake of any works which I have done, nor for the merit of my righteousness, but merely through the merits, and sufferings, and love of His Son, in whom He is always well pleased.

3. It has been vehemently objected, thirdly, ' that Christ is the only means of grace.' I answer, This is mere playing upon words. Explain your term, and the objection vanishes away. When we say, ' Prayer is a means of grace,' we understand a channel through which the grace of God is conveyed. When you say, ' Christ is the means of grace,' you understand

the sole price and purchaser of it, or, that 'no man cometh unto the Father, but through Him.' And who denies it? But this is utterly wide of the question.

4. 'But does not the Scripture' (it has been objected, fourthly) 'direct us to *wait* for salvation? Does not David say, "My soul waiteth upon God; for of Him cometh my salvation"? And does not Isaiah teach us the same thing saying, "O Lord, we have waited for Thee"? All this cannot be denied. Seeing it is the gift of God, we are undoubtedly to *wait* on Him for salvation. But how shall we wait? If God Himself has appointed a way, can you find a better way of waiting for Him? But that He hath appointed a way, hath been shown at large, and also what that way is. The very words of the prophet which you cite, put this out of all question. For the whole sentence runs thus: 'In the way of Thy judgements,' or ordinances, 'O Lord, have we waited for Thee' (Isa. xxvi. 8). And in the very same way did David wait, as his own words abundantly testify: 'I have waited for Thy saving health, O Lord, and have kept Thy law. Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end.'

5. 'Yea,' say some, 'but God has appointed another way: "Stand still, and see the salvation of God."'

Let us examine the Scriptures to which you refer. The first of them, with the context, runs thus,—

'And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and they were sore afraid. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord. And the Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward. But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it; and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea' (Exod. xiv. 10, &c.).

This was the *salvation of God*, which they *stood still* to see, by *marching forward* with all their might!

The other passage, wherein this expression occurs, stands

thus: 'There came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea. And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the Lord: even out of all the cities they came to seek the Lord. And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation, in the house of the Lord. Then upon Jahaziel came the Spirit of the Lord. And he said, Be not dismayed by reason of this great multitude. To-morrow go ye down against them: ye shall not need to fight in this battle. Set yourselves: stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord. And they rose early in the morning, and went forth. And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir; and every one helped to destroy another' (2 Chron. xx. 2, &c.).

Such was the salvation which the children of Judah saw. But how does all this prove, that we ought not to wait for the grace of God in the means which He hath ordained?

6. I shall mention but one objection more, which, indeed, does not properly belong to this head: nevertheless, because it has been so frequently urged, I may not wholly pass it by.

'Does not St. Paul say, "If ye be dead with Christ, why are ye subject to ordinances"? (Col. ii. 20). Therefore, a Christian, one that is dead with Christ, need not use the ordinances any more.'

So you say, 'If I am a Christian, I am not subject to the ordinances of Christ'! Surely, by the absurdity of this, you must see at the first glance, that the ordinances here mentioned cannot be the ordinances of Christ; that they must needs be the Jewish ordinances, to which it is certain a Christian is no longer subject.

And the same undeniably appears from the words immediately following, 'Touch not, taste not, handle not' all evidently referring to the ancient ordinances of the Jewish law.

So that this objection is the weakest of all. And, in spite of all, that great truth must stand unshaken,—that all who

desire the grace of God are to wait for it in the means which He hath ordained.

V 1. But this being allowed, that all who desire the grace of God are to wait for it in the means He hath ordained ; it may still be inquired, how those means should be used, both as to the order and the manner of using them.

With regard to the former, we may observe, there is a kind of order, wherein God Himself is generally pleased to use these means in bringing a sinner to salvation. A stupid, senseless wretch is going on in his own way, not having God in all his thoughts, when God comes upon him unawares, perhaps by an awakening sermon or conversation, perhaps by some awful providence, or, it may be, by an immediate stroke of His convincing Spirit, without any outward means at all. Having now a desire to flee from the wrath to come, he purposely goes to *hear* how it may be done. If he finds a preacher who speaks to the heart, he is amazed, and begins searching the Scriptures, whether these things are so. The more he *hears* and *reads*, the more convinced he is , and the more he meditates thereon day and night. Perhaps he finds some other book which explains and enforces what he has heard and read in Scripture. And by all these means, the arrows of conviction sink deeper into his soul. He begins also to *talk* of the things of God, which are ever uppermost in his thoughts ; yea, and to talk with God ; to *pray* to Him, although, through fear and shame, he scarce knows what to say. But whether he can speak or no, he cannot but pray, were it only in ‘ groans which cannot be uttered.’ Yet, being in doubt, whether ‘ the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity’ will regard such a sinner as him, he wants to pray with those who know God, with the faithful, in the great congregation. But here he observes others go up to the table of the Lord. He considers, ‘ Christ has said, “ Do this ! ” How is it that I do not ? I am too great a sinner. I am not fit. I am not worthy.’ After struggling with these scruples awhile, he breaks through. And thus he continues in God’s way, in hearing, reading, meditating, praying, and partaking of the Lord’s supper, till God,

in the manner that pleases Him, speaks to his heart, 'Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace.'

2. By observing this order of God, we may learn what means to recommend to any particular soul. If any of these will reach a stupid, careless sinner, it is probably hearing, or conversation. To such, therefore, we might recommend these, if he has ever any thought about salvation. To one who begins to feel the weight of his sins, not only hearing the Word of God, but reading it too, and perhaps other serious books, may be a means of deeper conviction. May you not advise him also to meditate on what he reads, that it may have its full force upon his heart? Yea, and to speak thereof, and not be ashamed, particularly among those who walk in the same path. When trouble and heaviness take hold upon him, should you not then earnestly exhort him to pour out his soul before God, 'always to pray and not to faint'; and when he feels the worthlessness of his own prayers, are you not to work together with God, and remind him of going up into the house of the Lord, and praying with all that fear Him? But if he does this, the dying word of his Lord will soon be brought to his remembrance, a plain intimation, that this is the time when we should second the motions of the blessed Spirit. And thus may we lead him, step by step, through all the means which God has ordained, not according to our own will, but just as the providence and the Spirit of God go before and open the way.

3. Yet, as we find no command in holy writ for any particular order to be observed herein, so neither do the providence and the Spirit of God adhere to any without variation, but the means into which different men are led, and in which they find the blessing of God, are varied, transposed, and combined together, a thousand different ways. Yet still our wisdom is to follow the leadings of His providence and His Spirit; to be guided herein (more especially as to the means wherein we ourselves seek the grace of God), partly by His outward providence, giving us the opportunity of using sometimes one means, sometimes another, partly by our experience, which it is whereby His free Spirit is pleased most to work in our heart.

And in the meantime, the sure and general rule for all who groan for the salvation of God is this,—whenever opportunity serves, use all the means which God has ordained; for who knows in which God will meet thee with the grace that bringeth salvation?

4. As to the manner of using them—whereon indeed it wholly depends whether they shall convey any grace at all to the user—it behoves us, first, always to retain a lively sense, that God is above all means. Have a care, therefore, of limiting the Almighty. He doeth whatsoever and whensoever it pleaseth Him. He can convey His grace either in or out of any of the means which He hath appointed. Perhaps He will. ‘Who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor?’ Look, then, every moment for His appearing! Be it at the hour you are employed in His ordinances, or before, or after that hour; or when you are hindered therefrom. He is not hindered, He is always ready, always able, always willing to save. ‘It is the Lord let Him do what seemeth Him good!’

Secondly. Before you use any means, let it be deeply impressed on your soul,—there is no *power* in this. It is, in itself, a poor, dead, empty thing: separate from God, it is a dry leaf, a shadow. Neither is there any *merit* in my using this, nothing intrinsically pleasing to God, nothing whereby I deserve any favour at His hands, no, not a drop of water to cool my tongue. But, because God bids, therefore I do; because He directs me to wait in this way, therefore here I wait for His free mercy, whereof cometh my salvation.

Settle this in your heart, that the *opus operatum*, the mere *work done*, profiteth nothing; that there is no *power* to save, but in the Spirit of God, no *merit* but in the blood of Christ; that, consequently, even what God ordains, conveys no grace to the soul, if you trust not in Him alone. On the other hand, he that does truly trust in Him cannot fall short of the grace of God, even though he were cut off from every outward ordinance, though he were shut up in the centre of the earth.

Thirdly. In using all means, seek God alone. In and through every outward thing, look singly to the *power* of His



Spirit, and the *merits* of His Son. Beware you do not stick in the *work* itself, if you do, it is all lost labour. Nothing short of God can satisfy your soul. Therefore, eye Him in all, through all, and above all.

Remember also, to use all means *as means*; as ordained, not for their own sake, but in order to the renewal of your soul in righteousness and true holiness. If, therefore, they actually tend to this, well; but, if not, they are dung and dross.

Lastly. After you have used any of these, take care how you value yourself thereon, how you congratulate yourself as having done some great thing. This is turning all into poison. Think, 'If God was not there, what does this avail? Have I not been adding sin to sin? How long? O Lord, save, or I perish! O lay not this sin to my charge!' If God was there, if His love flowed into your heart, you have forgot, as it were, the outward work. You see, you know, you feel, God is all in all. Be abased. Sink down before Him. Give Him all the praise. 'Let God in all things be glorified through Christ Jesus.' Let all your bones cry out, 'My song shall be always of the lovingkindness of the Lord: with my mouth will I ever be telling of Thy truth from one generation to another!'

4. The Canon of the Council of Trent on this subject runs: 'Si quis dixerit per ipsa novae legis sacramenta *ex opere operato* non conferri gratiam sed solam fidem divinae promissionis ad gratiam consequendam sufficere, anathema sit,' i.e. 'If any one shall affirm that grace is not conferred through the actual sacraments of the New Law as the result of their actual administration, but that faith alone in the divine promise is enough to obtain grace, let him be anathema.' In one sense this need not mean more than that faith alone without the sacraments is not sufficient; but it has been more usually interpreted as teaching that

the mere administration of them, quite apart from faith in the recipient, confers grace. The 25th Article of the Church of England affirms of the Sacraments, 'In such only as worthily receive the same they have a wholesome effect or operation'; and Article XXIX affirms, 'The wicked, and such as be void of a lively faith, although they do carnally and visibly press with their teeth (as Saint Augustine saith) the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, yet in no wise are they partakers of Christ; but rather, to their condemnation do eat and drink the Sacrament of so great a thing.'

[Here ends the first volume of the Sermons]

# SERMONS

O N

Several Occasions:

I N

THREE VOLUMES.

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B Y

JOHN WESLEY, M. A.

Fellow of *Lincoln-College*, OXFORD.

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V O L. II.

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*No Contents: no Index. The contents of the volume are unchanged in all editions published during Wesley's life, save that in the collected edition of his works published in 1771, the sermon on 'The Lord our Righteousness' is inserted.*

## SERMON XIII

### THE CIRCUMCISION OF THE HEART

PREACHED AT ST. MARY'S, OXFORD, BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY,  
ON JANUARY 1, 1733

As Wesley placed his sermon before the University on Salvation by Faith first in his first volume, so he began the second with another of his University sermons, preached at St. Mary's, Oxford, on January 1, 1733. It may be well to recall that he became a student at Christ Church in 1720; decided to take Orders, and was ordained deacon in 1725, and began to study Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying*, and Thomas à Kempis's *De Imitatione Christi*, with the result that he resolved to 'give my heart, yea, all my heart, to God'; 'to dedicate all my life to God, all my thoughts, and words, and actions'; and this he proceeded to do with characteristic thoroughness. It is not too much to speak of this as his first conversion; though it was not till May 24, 1738, that he received the consciousness that his sins were forgiven, and the witness of the Spirit that he was a child of God. But during the intervening years, though in his Georgia Journal he says that he was not a Christian, his maturer reflection led him to the more just conclusion that he was all this time a servant of God, though he had not yet the faith of a son. His first sermon, of which happily the MS. has been preserved, and was published in facsimile in 1903, was preached at South Leigh, a village near Witney, about ten miles west of Oxford, on Matt. vi. 33. A photograph of the little church may be seen in the Standard edition of the *Journal*, i. 63. On Wednesday, October 16, 1771, he says: 'I preached at South Leigh. Here it was that I preached my first sermon six and forty years ago. One man was in my present audience who heard it.' The earliest of his published sermons (in the posthumous fifth series) was a funeral discourse on the death of young Robin Griffiths, preached at Broadway (not, as is stated in the printed edition, at Epworth) on February 15, 1727. It was on 2 Sam. xii. 23, and is numbered CXXXV, and entitled *On Mourning for the Dead*. In 1726 he was elected a Fellow of Lincoln College, and in 1727 took his Master's degree; and in this same year he tells us, 'I read Mr. Law's *Christian Perfection* and *Serious Call*, and more explicitly resolved to be all devoted to God, in body, soul, and spirit.'

From August 1727 to November 1729 he was at Epworth and Wroot, acting as his father's curate, and in 1728 was ordained priest at Oxford by Bishop Potter. One sermon from this period has been preserved on 2 Cor. ii. 17, and was published as No. CXXXVI in the fifth (posthumous) series. In November 1729 he was summoned back to Oxford by Dr. Morley, the Rector of Lincoln, and he continued in residence there until he went to Georgia in 1735. He found that his brother Charles had gathered a few students round him at Christ Church for the cultivation of the spiritual life, and he at once became the head of this little society, which had already received the nickname of 'Methodist' from some University wag. It is not necessary to describe again their devotion, their self-sacrifice, their strict attention to all ecclesiastical rules, their diligent study of the Bible, and above all their charity to the poor and their ministrations to the prisoners in the jail. Their one guide was the Bible; and it was in 1730 that John Wesley says he 'began to be *homo unius libri*, to study (comparatively) no book but the Bible.' In 1732 he wrote a sermon for his pupils On the Duty of Constant Communion, which he afterwards published in the *Arminian Magazine*, 1787, p. 229, and republished in the edition of the sermons in 1788, No. CI, with this note: 'The following discourse was written about five and fifty years ago, for the use of my pupils at Oxford. I have added very little, but retrenched much; as I then used more words than I do now. But I thank God, I have not yet seen cause to alter my sentiments, in any point which is therein delivered.' In July 1732 he paid a visit to William Law at Putney, and no doubt their intercourse deepened the strong impression which Law's works had already produced upon him, and he began to study the *Theologia Germanica* and other writings of the Mystics. Meantime, the Oxford Methodists had come more and more into the public eye; and in *Fogg's Journal* of December 9, 1732, an abusive attack on them appeared, in which they were charged with asceticism, voluntary affliction of their bodies, fasting strictly twice a week, rising at four every morning, singing hymns for two hours every day, and in short 'practising everything contrary to the judgement of other persons.' The writer thinks their motives are poverty, hypocrisy used as a veil for vice, enthusiasm, madness, and superstitious scruples. It was immediately after this ribald attack that Wesley was called upon to preach his first sermon before the University on New Year's Day, 1733—the sermon now under consideration. He thought well of it; and in *Journal*, September 1, 1778, he says: 'I know not that I can write a better [sermon] on the Circumcision of the Heart than I did five and forty years ago. Perhaps, indeed, I may have read five or six hundred books more than I had then, and may know a little more history or natural philosophy than I did; but I am not sensible that this has made any

essential addition to my knowledge in divinity. Forty years ago I knew and preached every Christian doctrine which I preach now.' It will be noted that this latter date only goes back to 1738, when he first grasped the truth of conscious salvation by faith. In a letter to a friend written in May 1765 he says: 'January 1, 1733, I preached the sermon on the Circumcision of the Heart, which contains all that I now teach concerning salvation from all sin, and loving God with an undivided heart. In the same year I printed (the first time I ventured to print anything) for the use of my pupils, *A Collection of Forms of Prayer*, and in this I spoke explicitly of giving "the whole heart and the whole life to God." This was then, as it is now, my idea of perfection, though I should have started at the word.'

The sermon was not published until it appeared in the second volume of sermons in 1748; and in a footnote Wesley explains that he has added to the sermon as originally preached the latter half of i. 7, in which saving faith is defined as he came to understand it in 1738. The influence of Jeremy Taylor and William Law is very perceptible throughout, especially in the prominence given to humility, which takes precedence even of the Pauline triad, faith, hope, and love.

Wesley wrote in this same year a sermon on Eph. iv. 30, which was published in the *Arminian Magazine*, 1798, p. 607, and included as No. CXXXVIII in the fifth (posthumous) series. It is noteworthy that both in this and the previous sermon the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit is explicitly taught. To complete the record for this period, he preached before the University on June 11, 1734, what Charles calls his 'Jacobite sermon,' of which little seems to be known, except that it was submitted to the Vice-Chancellor beforehand and allowed by him. On Sunday, September 21, 1735, he preached before the University on Job iii. 17, and at the request of several of the hearers it was published the same year by C. Rivington—Wesley's first published sermon. It appears as No. CXXVII in the fourth (posthumous) series under the title of *The Trouble and Rest of Good Men*; and is remarkable for its statement that perfect holiness is not found on earth, but that death shall destroy at once the whole body of sin. The original edition is a fine bit of typography; quite the best printed of any of Wesley's publications. It is mistakenly given by Heylin as from Prov. iii. 17, under the title of *The Pleasantness of a Religious Life*. Finally, we have Sermon CXLI, *On the Holy Spirit*, from 2 Cor. iii. 17, the last in the fifth (posthumous) series, which is said in the heading to have been preached at St. Mary's, Oxford, on Whit Sunday, 1736. Wesley was in Frederica on that date (June 13, 1736), meeting the first society in America; he reckons this day as the second birthday of Methodism. So either the editor of the sermon was mistaken in his date, or the sermon was read at

Oxford by Wesley's substitute—which is quite possible. On internal evidence the sermon may well have been written by him before he left England.

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*Circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter.*—  
ROM. ii. 29.

I. IT is the melancholy remark of an excellent man, that he who now preaches the most essential duties of Christianity runs the hazard of being esteemed, by a great part of his hearers, 'a setter forth of new doctrines.' Most men have so *lived away* the substance of that religion, the profession whereof they still retain, that no sooner are any of those truths proposed which difference the Spirit of Christ from the spirit of the world, than they cry out, 'Thou bringest strange things to our ears; we would know what these things mean': though he is only preaching to them 'Jesus and the resurrection,' with the necessary consequence of it,—If Christ be risen, ye ought then to die unto the world, and to live wholly unto God.

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Par. I. Wesley has a very tantalizing habit of quoting authorities in this vague way. Who was this 'excellent man'? Samuel Wesley, senior? or William Law, with whom Wesley had had conversations at his home in Putney a few months before this? Non liquet! But his statement can be abundantly confirmed. Bishop Butler, writing in the *Analogy* (Preface, section 2) three years after this, says: 'It is come to be taken for granted, by many persons, that Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry; but that it is, now at length, discovered to be fictitious. And accordingly they treat it, as if nothing remained, but to set it up as a principal subject of mirth and ridicule.' In his charge to the clergy of Durham in 1751 he laments 'the general decay of religion in this nation, which is now observed by

every one.' Not to multiply quotations, I will only add Lecky's summary of the matter in *England in the Eighteenth Century*, I. i. p. 84: 'The more doctrinal aspects of religion were softened down, or suffered silently to recede, and, before the eighteenth century had much advanced, sermons had very generally become mere moral essays, characterized chiefly by a cold good sense, and appealing almost exclusively to prudential motives. It was only towards the close of the century that the influence of the Methodist movement, extending gradually through the Established Church, introduced a more emotional, and at the same time a more dogmatic, type of preaching.' Dr. Townsend's chapter on 'The Time and Conditions' (*New History of Methodism*, Book I. i.) should be consulted.

2. A hard saying this to the natural man, who is alive unto the world, and dead unto God; and one that he will not readily be persuaded to receive as the truth of God, unless it be so qualified in the interpretation, as to have neither use nor significancy left. He 'receiveth not the' words 'of the Spirit of God,' taken in their plain and obvious meaning, 'they are foolishness unto him: neither' indeed 'can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned': they are perceivable only by that spiritual sense, which in him was never yet awakened, for want of which he must reject, as idle fancies of men, what are both the wisdom and the power of God.

3. That 'circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter'—that the distinguishing mark of a true follower of Christ, of one who is in a state of acceptance with God, is not either outward circumcision, or baptism, or any other outward form, but a right state of soul, a mind and spirit renewed after the image of Him that created it—is one of those important truths that can only be spiritually discerned. And this the Apostle himself intimates in the next words 'Whose praise is not of men, but of God.' As if he had said, 'Expect not, whoever thou art, who thus followest thy great Master, that the world, the men who follow Him not, will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" Know that the circumcision of the heart, the seal of thy calling, is foolishness with the world. Be content to wait for thy applause till the day of thy Lord's appearing. In that day shalt thou have praise of God, in the great assembly of men and angels.'

I design, first, particularly to inquire, wherein this circumcision of the heart consists; and, secondly, to mention some reflections that naturally arise from such an inquiry.

I. 1. I am, first, to inquire, wherein that circumcision of the heart consists, which will receive the praise of God. In general we may observe, it is that habitual disposition of soul which, in the sacred writings, is termed holiness, and which directly implies, the being cleansed from sin, 'from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit'; and, by consequence, the being



endued with those virtues which were also in Christ Jesus, the being so 'renewed in the spirit of our mind,' as to be 'perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect.'

2. To be more particular: circumcision of heart implies humility, faith, hope, and charity. Humility, a right judgement of ourselves, cleanses our minds from those high conceits of our own perfections, from that undue opinion of our own abilities and attainments, which are the genuine fruit of a corrupted nature. This entirely cuts off that vain thought, 'I am rich, and wise, and have need of nothing'; and convinces us that we are by nature 'wretched, and poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked,' It convinces us, that in our best estate we are, of ourselves, all sin and vanity; that confusion, and ignorance, and error reign over our understanding, that unreasonable, earthly, sensual, devilish passions usurp authority over our will; in a word, that there is no whole part in our soul, that all the foundations of our nature are out of course.

3. At the same time we are convinced, that we are not sufficient of ourselves to help ourselves, that, without the Spirit of God, we can do nothing but add sin to sin; that it is He alone who worketh in us by His almighty power, either to will or do that which is good, it being as impossible for us even to think a good thought, without the supernatural assistance of His Spirit, as to create ourselves, or to renew our whole souls in righteousness and true holiness.

4. A sure effect of our having formed this right judgement of the sinfulness and helplessness of our nature, is a disregard of that 'honour which cometh of man,' which is usually paid to some supposed excellency in us. He who knows himself, neither desires nor values the applause which he knows he deserves not. It is therefore 'a very small thing with him, to be judged by man's judgement.' He has all reason to think,

I. 2. 'Conceits,' i.e., conceptions, ideas—the original meaning of the word.

The influence of Law is clearly discernible in the position given to humility as the first of the Christian

Graces. Indeed, this section of the sermon is based almost entirely on chapter xvi of the *Serious Call*, which should be consulted by the student.

by comparing what it has said, either for or against him, with what he feels in his own breast, that the world, as well as the god of this world, was 'a liar from the beginning.' And even as to those who are not of the world, though he would choose, if it were the will of God, that they should account of him as of one desirous to be found a faithful steward of his Lord's goods, if haply this might be a means of enabling him to be of more use to his fellow servants, yet as this is the one end of his wishing for their approbation, so he does not at all rest upon it: for he is assured, that whatever God wills, he can never want instruments to perform; since He is able, even of these stones, to raise up servants to do His pleasure.

5. This is that lowliness of mind, which they have learned of Christ, who follow His example and tread in His steps. And this knowledge of their disease, whereby they are more and more cleansed from one part of it, pride and vanity, disposes them to embrace, with a willing mind, the second thing implied in circumcision of the heart,—that faith ~~which alone is able to make them whole,~~ which is the one medicine given under heaven to heal their sickness.

6. The best guide of the blind, the surest light of them that are in darkness, the most perfect instructor of the foolish, is faith. But it must be such a faith as is 'mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds'—to the overturning all the prejudices of corrupt reason, all the false maxims revered among men, all evil customs and habits, all that 'wisdom of the world which is foolishness with God', as 'casteth down imaginations,' reasonings, 'and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringeth into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.'

7. 'All things are possible to him that' thus 'believeth.' 'The eyes of his understanding being enlightened,' he sees what is his calling, even to glorify God, who hath bought him with so high a price, in his body and in his spirit, which

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7. The second part of this paragraph ('but likewise the forgiveness of sins') was added in the

edition of the sermon in Vol. II of the sermons (1748); and it should be compared with the testimony

now are God's by redemption, as well as by creation. He feels what is 'the exceeding greatness of His power,' who, as He raised up Christ from the dead, so is able to quicken us, dead in sin, 'by His Spirit which dwelleth in us.' 'This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith'; that faith, which is not only an unshaken assent to all that God hath revealed in Scripture—and in particular to those important truths, 'Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners,' 'He bare our sins in His own body on the tree,' 'He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world,'—but likewise the revelation of Christ in our hearts, a divine evidence or conviction of His love, His free, unmerited love to me a sinner; a sure confidence in His pardoning mercy, wrought in us by the Holy Ghost; a confidence, whereby every true believer is enabled to bear witness, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth,' that

given in the *Journal*, May 24, 1738: 'I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death.' Compare also the definition in Sermon V, iv. 2: 'Justifying faith implies not only a divine evidence or conviction that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself"; but a sure trust and confidence that Christ died for *my* sins, that He loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*.' He had not found this in Law; and he wrote a letter to him on May 14, 1738, in which he says, 'For two years (more especially) I have been preaching after the model of your two practical treatises; and all that heard have allowed that the law is great, wonderful, and holy. But no sooner did they attempt to fulfil it, but they found that it is too high for man; and that by doing "the works of the law shall no flesh living

be justified."' He goes on to complain bitterly that Law had never advised him to trust in Christ for salvation; and he explains this by the supposition that Law had never had justifying faith himself; and that this is the reason of his 'extreme roughness, and morose and sour behaviour.' The tone of the letter is most unfortunate, considering how much Wesley owed to the older man; and the patience and humility of Law's answer ought to have made his critic ashamed of himself, though his answer to it gives no sign of regret or apology. The whole correspondence may be read in Appendix XXVI to the Standard edition of the *Journal*. Wesley's tone is regrettable, indeed indefensible; but the substance of his criticism is right: Law's books are admirably calculated to convince the sinner and to stimulate the believer; but they do not show the way of salvation.

I have an 'Advocate with the Father,' and that 'Jesus Christ the righteous' is my Lord, and 'the propitiation for my sins'—I know He hath 'loved me, and given Himself for me'—He hath reconciled me, even me, to God; and I 'have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.'

8. Such a faith as this cannot fail to show evidently the power of Him that inspires it, by delivering His children from the yoke of sin, and 'purging their consciences from dead works', by strengthening them so, that they are no longer constrained to obey sin in the desires thereof, but instead of 'yielding their members unto it, as instruments of unrighteousness,' they now 'yield themselves' entirely 'unto God, as those that are alive from the dead.'

9. Those who are thus by faith born of God have also strong consolation through hope. This is the next thing which the circumcision of the heart implies, even the testimony of their own spirit with the Spirit which witnesses in their hearts that they are the children of God. Indeed it is the same Spirit who works in them that clear and cheerful confidence that their heart is upright toward God, that good assurance, that they now do, through His grace, the things which are acceptable in His sight; that they are now in the path which leadeth to life, and shall, by the mercy of God, endure therein to the end. It is He who giveth them a lively expectation of receiving all good things at God's hand, a joyous prospect of that crown of glory which is reserved in heaven for them. By this anchor a Christian is kept steady in the midst of the waves of this troublesome world, and preserved from striking upon either of those fatal rocks,—presumption or despair. He is neither discouraged by the misconceived severity of his Lord, nor does he 'despise the riches of His goodness.' He neither apprehends the difficulties of the race set before him to be greater than he has strength to conquer, nor expects them to be so little as to yield in the conquest till he has put forth all his strength. The experience he already has in the Christian warfare, as it assures him his 'labour is not in vain,' if 'whatever his hand findeth to do, he doeth it with his might', so it forbids his entertaining so vain a thought, as that he can

otherwise gain any advantage ; as that any virtue can be shown, any praise attained, by faint hearts and feeble hands ; or, indeed, by any but those who pursue the same course with the great Apostle of the Gentiles : ‘ I,’ says he, ‘ so run, not as uncertainly ; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air : but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection ; lest, by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.’

10. By the same discipline is every good soldier of Christ to inure himself to endure hardship. Confirmed and strengthened by this, he will be able not only to renounce the works of darkness, but every appetite too, and every affection, which is not subject to the law of God. For ‘ every one,’ saith St. John, ‘ who hath this hope, purifieth himself even as He is pure.’ It is his daily care, by the grace of God in Christ, and through the blood of the covenant, to purge the inmost recesses of his soul from the lusts that before possessed and defiled it ; from uncleanness, and envy, and malice, and wrath ; from every passion and temper that is after the flesh, that either springs from or cherishes his native corruption : as well knowing, that he whose very body is the temple of God, ought to admit into it nothing common or unclean ; and that holiness becometh that house for ever, where the Spirit of holiness vouchsafes to dwell.

11. Yet lackest thou one thing, whosoever thou art, that to a deep humility, and a steadfast faith, hast joined a lively hope, and thereby in a good measure cleansed thy heart from its inbred pollution. If thou wilt be perfect, add to all these, charity, add love, and thou hast the circumcision of the heart. ‘ Love is the fulfilling of the law, the end of the commandment.’ Very excellent things are spoken of love, it is the essence, the spirit, the life of all virtue. It is not only the first and great command, but it is all the commandments in one. ‘ Whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are amiable,’ or honourable, ‘ if there be any virtue,

9. The A.V. of 1 Cor. ix. 27 is very inadequate. The words mean ‘ I buffet’ (or bruise, beat black and

blue) ‘ my body, and treat it as a bond-slave.’ The figure of the prize-fight in the previous verse is kept up.

if there be any praise,' they are all comprised in this one word,—love. In this is perfection, and glory, and happiness. The royal law of heaven and earth is this, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.'

12. Not that this forbids us to love anything besides God : it implies that we love our brother also. Nor yet does it forbid us (as some have strangely imagined) to take pleasure in anything but God. To suppose this, is to suppose the Fountain of holiness is directly the author of sin, since He has inseparably annexed pleasure to the use of those creatures which are necessary to sustain the life He has given us. This, therefore, can never be the meaning of His command. What the real sense of it is, both our blessed Lord and His Apostles tell us too frequently, and too plainly, to be misunderstood. They all with one mouth bear witness, that the true meaning of those several declarations, 'The Lord thy God is one Lord'; 'Thou shalt have no other gods but Me'; 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy strength'; 'Thou shalt cleave unto Him'; 'The desire of thy soul shall be to His name,' is no other than this The one perfect Good shall be your one ultimate end. One thing shall ye desire for its own sake,—the fruition of Him that is All in all. One happiness shall ye propose to your souls, even an union with Him that made them, the having 'fellowship with the Father and the Son'; the being joined to the Lord in one Spirit. One design you are to pursue to the end of time,—the enjoyment of God in time and in eternity. Desire other things, so far as they tend to this. Love the creature, as it leads to the Creator. But in every step you take, be this the glorious point that terminates your view. Let every affection, and thought, and word, and work,

12. This is Wesley's answer to the charge in *Fogg's Journal* which had appeared in the previous month against the Oxford Methodists: 'They avoid, as much as possible, every object that may affect them with any pleasant or grateful sensations. All social entertainments

and diversions are disapproved of; and, in endeavouring to avoid luxury, they not only exclude what is convenient, but what is absolutely necessary for the support of life; fancying (as is thought) that religion was designed to contradict nature.'

be subordinate to this. Whatever ye desire or fear, whatever ye seek or shun, whatever ye think, speak or do, be it in order to your happiness in God, the sole End, as well as Source, of your being.

13. Have no end, no ultimate end, but God. Thus our Lord: 'One thing is needful', and if thine eye be singly fixed on this one thing, 'thy whole body shall be full of light.' Thus St. Paul: 'This one thing I do, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus.' Thus St. James: 'Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded.' Thus St. John: 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.' The seeking happiness in what gratifies either the desire of the flesh, by agreeably striking upon the outward senses; the desire of the eye, of the imagination, by its novelty, greatness, or beauty, or the pride of life, whether by pomp, grandeur, power, or, the usual consequence of them, applause and admiration,—'is not of the Father,' cometh not from, neither is approved by, the Father of spirits: 'but of the world'; it is the distinguishing mark of those who will not have Him to reign over them.

II. 1. Thus have I particularly inquired, what that circumcision of heart is, which will obtain the praise of God. I am, in the second place, to mention some reflections that naturally arise from such an inquiry. as a plain rule whereby every man may judge of himself, whether he be of the world or of God.

And, first, it is clear from what has been said, that no man has a title to the praise of God, unless his heart is circumcised by humility; unless he is little, and base, and vile in his own eyes; unless he is deeply convinced of that inbred 'corruption of his nature,' 'whereby he is very far gone from original righteousness,' being prone to all evil, averse to all good,

II. 1. Article IX of the Church of England runs: 'Original sin is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man . . . whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness.'

corrupt and abominable, having a 'carnal mind which is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be'; unless he continually feels in his inmost soul, that without the Spirit of God resting upon him, he can neither think, nor desire, nor speak, nor act anything good, or well-pleasing in His sight.

No man, I say, has a title to the praise of God, till he feels his want of God; nor indeed, till he seeketh that 'honour which cometh of God' only, and neither desires nor pursues that which cometh of man, unless so far only as it tends to this.

2. Another truth, which naturally follows from what has been said, is, that none shall obtain the honour that cometh of God, unless his heart be circumcised by faith, even a 'faith of the operation of God', unless, refusing to be any longer led by his senses, appetites, or passions, or even by that blind leader of the blind, so idolized by the world, natural reason, he lives and walks by faith, directs every step, as 'seeing Him that is invisible', 'looks not at the things that are seen, which are temporal, but at the things that are not seen, which are eternal', and governs all his desires, designs, and thoughts, all his actions and conversations, as one who is entered in within the veil, where Jesus sits at the right hand of God.

3. It were to be wished, that they were better acquainted with this faith who employ much of their time and pains in laying another foundation; in grounding religion on the eternal *fitness* of things, on the intrinsic *excellence* of virtue, and the *beauty* of actions flowing from it; on the *reasons*, as they term them, of good and evil, and the *relations*, of beings to each other. Either these accounts of the grounds of Christian duty coincide with the scriptural, or not. If they do,

3. This criticism of ethical philosophy is unreasonable. The foundation of Christian ethics is faith in Christ, and its rules are to be found in the Scriptures; but that does not in any way forbid us to inquire into the reason why certain actions are

there prescribed as right, and others condemned as wrong. Christianity is a reasonable religion; and right actions are not right because they are prescribed in the Bible; they are prescribed in the Bible because they are right. Wesley is aiming



why are well-meaning men perplexed, and drawn from the weightier matters of the law, by a cloud of terms, whereby the easiest truths are explained into obscurity? If they are not, then it behoves them to consider who is the author of this new doctrine; whether he is likely to be an angel from heaven, who preacheth another gospel than that of Christ Jesus; though, if he were, God, not we, hath pronounced his sentence 'Let him be accursed.'

4. Our gospel, as it knows no other foundation of good works than faith, or of faith than Christ, so it clearly informs us, we are not His disciples while we either deny Him to be the Author, or His Spirit to be the Inspirer and Perfecter, both of our faith and works. 'If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.' He alone can quicken those who are dead unto God, can breathe into them the breath of Christian life, and so prevent, accompany, and follow them with His grace, as to bring their good desires to good effect. And, 'as many as are thus led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.' This is God's short and plain account of true religion and virtue, and 'other foundation can no man lay.'

5. From what has been said, we may, thirdly, learn, that none is truly 'led by the Spirit,' unless that 'Spirit bear witness with his spirit, that he is a child of God', unless he see the prize and the crown before him, and 'rejoice in hope of the glory of God.' So greatly have they erred who have taught

especially at Samuel Clarke, who in his Boyle Lectures, published in 1705, maintained that 'from the necessary and eternal different relations that different things bear to one another result fitness and unfitness of the application of different things or different relations one to another'; and that this intuitively discerned fitness is the foundation of the principles of morality. Hence he held that a rational creature, as such, must act in conformity with its cognition of moral truth; but mankind having become unnaturally corrupted, future rewards and

punishments are necessary as the sanctions of virtue. We find the same impatience of philosophical inquiry into ethical questions in Sermon XI, 3.

5. It is curious to find this unequivocal statement of the necessity for the witness of the Spirit at this date.

The reference in the next sentence is to Cudworth and the Cambridge Platonists, who taught that man ought to aim at the realization of absolute good for its own sake, without any regard for its consequences.

that, in serving God, we ought not to have a view to our own happiness! Nay, but we are often and expressly taught of God, to have 'respect unto the recompense of reward', to balance the toil with the 'joy set before us,' these 'light afflictions' with that 'exceeding weight of glory.' Yea, we are 'aliens to the covenant of promise,' we are 'without God in the world,' until God, 'of His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a living hope of the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.'

6. But if these things are so, it is high time for those persons to deal faithfully with their own souls, who are so far from finding in themselves this joyful assurance that they fulfil the terms, and shall obtain the promises, of that covenant, as to quarrel with the covenant itself, and blaspheme the terms of it, to complain, they are too severe; and that no man ever did or shall live up to them. What is this but to reproach God, as if He were an hard Master, requiring of His servants more than He enables them to perform?—as if He had mocked the helpless works of His hands, by binding them to impossibilities; by commanding them to overcome, where neither their own strength nor His grace was sufficient for them?

7. These blasphemers might almost persuade those to imagine themselves guiltless, who, in the contrary extreme, hope to fulfil the commands of God without taking any pains at all. Vain hope! that a child of Adam should ever expect to see the kingdom of Christ and of God without striving, without agonizing, first 'to enter in at the strait gate'; that one who was 'conceived and born in sin,' and whose 'inward parts are very wickedness,' should once entertain a thought of being 'purified as his Lord is pure,' unless he tread in His steps, and 'take up his cross daily,' unless he 'cut off his right hand,' and 'pluck out the right eye, and cast it from him', that he should ever dream of shaking off his old opinions, passions,

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7. This paragraph seems to teach that it is possible for a man to attain entire sanctification by his own effort and self-denial. This Wesley afterwards strenuously denied; but

it was his view at this time, and he exemplified it in his practice. He was still seeking salvation by the works of the law.

tempers, of being 'sanctified throughout in spirit, soul, and body,' without a constant and continued course of general self-denial!

8. What less than this can we possibly infer from the above-cited words of St. Paul, who, living 'in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses' for Christ's sake; who, being full of 'signs and wonders, and mighty deeds,' who, having been 'caught up into the third heaven,'—yet reckoned, as a late author strongly expresses it, that all his virtues would be insecure, and even his salvation in danger, without this constant self-denial? 'So run I,' says he, 'not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air': by which he plainly teaches us, that he who does not thus run, who does not thus deny himself daily, does run uncertainly, and fighteth to as little purpose as he that 'beateth the air.'

9. To as little purpose does he talk of 'fighting the fight of faith,' as vainly hope to attain the crown of incorruption (as we may, lastly, infer from the preceding observations), whose heart is not circumcised by love. Love, cutting off both the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life—engaging the whole man, body, soul, and spirit, in the ardent pursuit of that one object—is so essential to a child of God, that without it, whosoever liveth is counted dead before Him. 'Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so

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8. This whole paragraph is taken almost verbally from Law's *Christian Perfection*, vii. p. 246 (edition of 1726). 'A late author' only means an author who has lately published his work; Law was, of course, still alive.

9. Wesley anticipates most modern translators in preferring 'love' to 'charity' in 1 Cor. xiii. He defends this translation in Sermon XCI, On Charity, I. 1, on the ground that 'Thousands are misled thereby'

(i.e. by the translation 'charity') 'and imagine that the charity treated of in this chapter refers chiefly, if not wholly, to outward actions, and to mean little more than almsgiving.' But he is wrong in saying that the rendering 'charity' is not found till 1649. It was Wyclif's translation, and reappears in the Rheims New Testament (1582) and in the A.V. (1611). Tindal, Cranmer, Coverdale, and the Geneva Bible have 'love'; and are followed by the R.V.

as to remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing.' Nay, 'though I give all my goods to feed the poor, and my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.'

10. Here, then, is the sum of the perfect law; this is the true circumcision of the heart. Let the spirit return to God that gave it, with the whole train of its affections. 'Unto the place from whence all the rivers came,' thither let them flow again. Other sacrifices from us He would not, but the living sacrifice of the heart He hath chosen. Let it be continually offered up to God through Christ, in flames of holy love. And let no creature be suffered to share with Him for He is a jealous God. His throne will He not divide with another: He will reign without a rival. Be no design, no desire admitted there, but what has Him for its ultimate object. This is the way wherein those children of God once walked, who, being dead, still speak to us 'Desire not to live but to praise His name let all your thoughts, words, and works tend to His glory. Set your heart firm on Him, and on other things only as they are in and from Him. Let your soul be filled with so entire a love of Him that you may love nothing but for His sake.' 'Have a pure intention of heart, a steadfast regard to His glory in all your actions.' 'Fix your eye upon the blessed hope of your calling, and make all the things of the world minister unto it.' For then, and not till then, is that 'mind in us which was also in Christ Jesus'; when, in every motion of our heart, in every word of our tongue, in every work of our hands, we 'pursue nothing but in relation to Him, and in subordination to His pleasure', when we, too, neither think, nor speak, nor act, to fulfil our 'own will, but the will of Him that sent us'; when, whether we 'eat, or drink, or whatever we do, we do all to the glory of God.'

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10. 'Those children of God,' i.e. the Mystic writers, many of whom Wesley had studied. Leger, in *La Jeunesse de Wesley*, p. 184, gives a list of those who were 'his favourite Masters': Clement of Alexandria, Chrysostom, Macarius, Taylor, John Smith, Cudworth, Worthington, Henry More,

Richard Lucas, John Norris, Herbert, Scougal, A. H. Francke, Boehm, Castaniza, Francis de Sales, De Renty, Retz, D'Olier, and Vincent de Paul; he curiously omits Thomas à Kempis. I have not identified the several quotations, but in substance they can be found in almost all these authors.

## SERMON XIV

### THE MARKS OF THE NEW BIRTH

WESLEY gave a series of expositions of the earlier chapters of St. John's Gospel to the London societies in March and April 1741, this particular passage being entered as the subject for Friday, April 3. It is entered as the text of a sermon on January 2, 1743, when he preached from it at Epworth at 5 a.m. It was repeated at Evesham in the evening of January 12. It appears in the sermon list about seven times from 1750 to 1757. His favourite text on the New Birth was the previous verse (Sermon No. XXXIX, q.v.).

The text is unfortunately chosen for this sermon. The context is entirely disregarded and the passage taken merely as a motto. The 'so' obviously refers to the previous clause of the verse; and the meaning is that the processes of the new birth are as mysterious and inexplicable as the blowing of the wind. The treatment of the subject is analogous to that of the last sermon—The Circumcision of the Heart—faith, hope, and love being the marks of the new birth; and the section on Love owes a good deal to chap. xx of Law's *Serious Call*. It is related to the following sermon much as No. XI (The Witness of our own Spirit) is related to No. XLVI (Sin in Believers). The first sets out the ideal of the Christian life; the second makes the qualifications which practical experience shows to be necessary.

The teaching of the first paragraph on Baptismal Regeneration requires a fuller consideration than a footnote would permit. The Article (XXVII), Of Baptism, is not explicit. It states that baptism is not only a sign of profession, but also a sign of regeneration or new birth; and that thereby 'the promises of the forgiveness of sin and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost are visibly signed and sealed'; but it does not definitely say that the baptized infant is regenerated. The Office for Baptism is, however, much more definite; prayer is offered, 'Give Thy Holy Spirit to this infant, that he may be *born again*, and be made an heir of everlasting salvation'; and after the administration of the sacrament, the priest shall say, 'Seeing that this child *is regenerate* and grafted into the body of Christ's Church, let us give thanks to Almighty God'; and again, 'We yield Thee most hearty thanks, most merciful Father,

that it hath pleased Thee to *regenerate* this infant with Thy Holy Spirit,' &c. Wesley was trained up in and accepted this view. In Sermon XXXIX, iv. 2, he says: 'It is certain our Church supposes that all who are baptized in their infancy are at the same time born again; and it is allowed that the whole Office for the Baptism of Infants proceeds upon this supposition. Nor is it an objection of any weight against this, that we cannot comprehend how this work can be wrought in infants. For neither can we comprehend how it is wrought in a person of riper years.' But he significantly adds, 'Whatever be the case with infants' (which implies some hesitation on his part) 'it is sure all of riper years who are baptized are not at the same time born again.' So in Sermon XV, i. 1: 'From all the passages of holy writ wherein this expression "the being born of God" occurs, we may learn that it implies not barely the being baptized, or any outward change whatever; but a vast inward change.' In *Journal*, May 24, 1738, he says: 'I believe till I was about ten years old, I had not sinned away that "washing of the Holy Ghost" which was given me in baptism.' In the *Treatise on Baptism*, published in 1756, he says 'that in baptism infants are (1) freed from the guilt of original sin, so that, if they die before committing actual sin, they will be saved; (2) admitted into the new covenant relation between God and His people, as by circumcision the children of Jews were admitted into the old covenant; (3) admitted into the Church; (4) made the children of God by adoption and grace. 'Herein,' he says, 'a principle of grace is infused, which will not be wholly taken away, unless we quench the Holy Spirit of God by long-continued wickedness.' However, in the *Sunday Service of the Methodists* (1784 and 1786), the Office for Baptism was much abridged; the three passages quoted above were omitted; the word 'regenerated' is not used, except in the quotation from John iii. 5 in the introductory exhortation; the minister at the end gives thanks 'that this child is admitted into the body of Christ's Church,' and that it hath pleased God 'to receive this infant for Thy own child by adoption, and to admit him into Thy holy Church.' In the editions of 1857 and later, the thanksgivings at the end were omitted altogether. When the *Book of Offices* was revised in 1882, there was a strenuous debate in the Conference over the alterations proposed in the Office for Baptism. The reference to John iii. 5 was left out by the Committee, as well as all phrases that might seem to suggest that the infant was born again in baptism; a prayer was added for the parents; and the short prayers, placed previously just before the act of baptism, were transferred to the end of the service, to avoid the supposition that they were meant to be answered at the time the child was baptized. I was present at the debate, and well remember how it was urged by some of the brethren that we were bound to accept the doctrine of

baptismal regeneration because Mr. Wesley affirmed it in the Standard Sermons. Dr. Rigg replied that we were not bound to accept every doctrine that might be incidentally mentioned in the Standards, but only the general scheme of doctrine therein contained. The Conference supported this view, and the revised form was agreed to, with the proviso that liberty should be left to any minister to use the older form if he so desired (*Minutes*, 1882, p. 223). This, however, did not prevent two well-known ministers from resigning their connexion with the Conference and entering the Church of England. The Methodist Church has thus definitely repudiated the view that the infant is born again in baptism, though liberty of judgement is left to each minister; and it may fairly be argued that Wesley's revision of the service in 1784 proves that in his later life he altered his earlier opinion. Watson in his *Institutes* (*Works*, xii. 266) says: 'To the infant child it is a visible reception into the same covenant and church—a pledge of acceptance through Christ—the bestowment of a title to all the grace of the covenant as circumstances may require, and as the mind of the child may be capable, or made capable, of receiving it. It secures, too, the gift of the Holy Spirit in those secret spiritual influences by which the actual regeneration of those children who die in infancy is effected; and which are a seed of life in those who are spared.' Dr. W. B. Pope maintains that baptism is not a mere sign or badge of Christian profession, nor only an impressive emblem of the washing away of sin; it does convey its accompanying grace to the recipient. I remember being present during the Conference of 1885 at Trinity Chapel, Southport, when Dr. Pope baptized a child; and as he handed it back to its parents, he said, 'Doubt not but your child has received in this holy sacrament all the grace of which he is now capable.' Our danger in Methodism has not been in the direction of over-estimating the value of this sacrament, but rather in regarding it as merely the recognition of the child's formal reception into the Church. Our perfunctoriness in the administration of it, and our subsequent failure to look after our baptized children and give them due pastoral attention, has been a grave cause of loss and harm to ourselves, and has given no little advantage to those who have sought to cast discredit on infant baptism and to urge our young people to be rebaptized by immersion. It is a question whether we have not made a mistake in dropping the rite of Confirmation without substituting for it some solemn service at which our baptized children could consciously take upon themselves the vows made for them at their baptism.

This sermon was first published in Vol. II of the Sermons in 1748.

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*So is every one that is born of the Spirit.*—JOHN iii. 8.

1. How is every one that is 'born of the Spirit'—that is, born again—born of God? What is meant by the being born again, the being born of God, or being born of the Spirit? What is implied in the being a son or a child of God, or having the Spirit of adoption? That these privileges, by the free mercy of God, are ordinarily annexed to baptism (which is thence termed by our Lord in a preceding verse, the being 'born of water and of the Spirit') we know; but we would know what these privileges are: what is the new birth?

2. Perhaps it is not needful to give a definition of this, seeing the Scripture gives none. But as the question is of the deepest concern to every child of man; since, 'except a man be born again,' born of the Spirit, 'he cannot see the kingdom of God', I propose to lay down the marks of it in the plainest manner, just as I find them laid down in Scripture.

I. 1. The first of these, and the foundation of all the rest, is faith. So St. Paul, 'Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus' (Gal. iii. 26). So St. John, 'To them gave He power' (*ἐξουσίαν*, *right* or *privilege*, it may rather be translated) 'to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born,' when they believed,

Par. 1. Some commentators have questioned whether John iii. 5 has any reference to Christian baptism, as it was not instituted at the time of this conversation with Nicodemus; but, whilst he could only have understood the words in the general sense of a baptism of initiation into the Kingdom, analogous to John's baptism, I cannot doubt that in our Lord's mind there was a clear prevision of the baptism which He was to institute; just as in John vi. there is a prevision of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

I. 1. Wesley does not seem to have grasped clearly the distinction

between the views of St. Paul and St. John on Sonship. St. Paul regards it as adoption, St. John as regeneration; though both make faith the condition of receiving the blessing. In this passage (Gal. iii. 26) St. Paul also connects it with baptism, as is seen from the following verse, and with the new life in fellowship with Christ.

The interpretation of John i. 12, 13 is vitiated by this confusion. The passage runs, 'As many as received Him, to them gave He legitimate right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name; who were begotten, not of



'not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh,' not by natural generation, 'nor of the will of man,' like those children adopted by men, in whom no inward change is thereby wrought, 'but of God' (John i. 12, 13). And again, in his General Epistle, 'Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God' (1 John v. 1).

2. But it is not a barely notional or speculative faith that is here spoken of by the Apostles. It is not a bare assent to this proposition, 'Jesus is the Christ', nor indeed to all the propositions contained in our creed, or in the Old and New Testament. It is not merely an assent to any or all these credible things, as credible. To say this, were to say (which who could hear?) that the devils were born of God; for they have this faith. They, trembling, believe, both that Jesus is the Christ, and that all Scripture, having been given by inspiration of God, is true as God is true. It is not only an assent to divine truth, upon the testimony of God, or upon the evidence of miracles; for *they* also heard the words of His mouth, and knew Him to be a faithful and true witness. They could not but receive the testimony He gave, both of Himself, and of the Father which sent Him. They saw likewise the mighty works which He did, and thence believed that He 'came forth from God.' Yet, notwithstanding this faith, they are still 'reserved in chains of darkness unto the judgement of the great day.'

3. For all this is no more than a dead faith. The true, living, Christian faith, which whosoever hath is born of God, is not only assent, an act of the understanding, but a disposition, which God hath wrought in his heart, 'a sure trust and con-

blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' There is no question here of adoption, but of a divine begetting; and this is not the result of mere physical instinct, nor of the designed gratification of it, nor even of the purposed begetting of a child through its operation, but of God.

The third passage quoted (1 John v. 1) is not really relevant. Belief

that Jesus is the Messiah is here spoken of rather as the test and proof than the cause of the new birth. The apostle is thinking of those who claimed to be Christians whilst denying that Jesus was the Messiah; see 1 John ii. 18-23.

3. This whole paragraph is closely dependent on the Homily on Salvation; the phrase 'a dead faith' occurs there frequently; 'a sure

fidence in God, that, through the merits of Christ, his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God.' This implies, that a man first renounce himself, that, in order to be 'found in Christ,' to be accepted through Him, he totally rejects all 'confidence in the flesh'; that, 'having nothing to pay,' having no trust in his own works or righteousness of any kind, he comes to God as a lost, miserable, self-destroyed, self-condemned, undone, helpless sinner; as one whose mouth is utterly stopped, and who is altogether 'guilty before God.' Such a sense of sin (commonly called 'despair' by those who speak evil of the things they know not), together with a full conviction, such as no words can express, that of Christ only cometh our salvation, and an earnest desire of that salvation, must precede a living faith, a trust in Him, who 'for us paid our ransom by His death, and [for us] fulfilled the law in His life.' This faith then, whereby we are born of God, is 'not only a belief of all the articles of our faith, but also a true confidence of the mercy of God through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

4. An immediate and constant fruit of this faith whereby we are born of God, a fruit which can in no wise be separated from it, no, not for an hour, is power over sin,—power over outward sin of every kind, over every evil word and work; for wheresoever the blood of Christ is thus applied, it 'purgeth the conscience from dead works,'—and over inward sin, for it purifieth the heart from every unholy desire and temper. This fruit of faith St. Paul has largely described, in the sixth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. 'How shall we,' saith he, 'who' by faith 'are dead to sin, live any longer therein?'

trust,' &c., is quoted from the third part of the Homily; 'who for us paid our ransom,' &c., is at the end of Part I of the Homily; 'not only a belief,' &c., is substantially from Part III of the Homily.

4. The uncompromising teaching of this and the following paragraphs on the absolute freedom from sin of the regenerate believer is corrected in the following sermon, as well as

in that on Sin in Believers. It is admitted (Sermon XLVI, iii. 1) that 'even in the regenerate there are two principles, contrary the one to the other,' and (Sermon XLVI, iii. 7) that believers 'are daily sensible of sin remaining in their heart'; so that it is not true that 'the blood of Christ purifieth the heart from every unholy desire and temper,' as here stated. Moreover, in the

'Our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.' 'Likewise, reckon ye yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign' even 'in your mortal body,' 'but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead.' 'For sin shall not have dominion over you. God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin . . . but being made free,'—the plain meaning is, God be thanked, that though ye were, in time past, the servants of sin, yet now, 'being free from sin, ye are become the servants of righteousness.'

5. The same invaluable privilege of the sons of God is as strongly asserted by St. John ; particularly with regard to the former branch of it, namely, power over outward sin. After he had been crying out, as one astonished at the depth of the riches of the goodness of God, 'Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God ! Beloved, now are we the sons of God ; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him , for we shall see Him as He is ' (1 John iii. 1, &c.),—he soon adds, 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin ; for His seed remaineth in him and he cannot sin, because he is born of God ' (verse 9). But some men will say, 'True : whosoever

next sermon it is stated and proved from scriptural examples that 'those whom we cannot deny to have been truly born of God nevertheless, not only could, but did, commit sin, even gross, outward sin.' It would have saved Wesley much trouble if he had recognized that we have in the New Testament an ideal set before us, to which we can more and more approximate, until we are perfected in love, but which is not at once attained when we are born again.

5. This diatribe on the interpretation of 1 John iii. 9 as 'doth not commit sin *habitually*' recoils on the

preacher's own head ; for it is practically what he teaches in the next sermon. Of course St. John does not say '*habitually*,' for he is describing an ideal, and no one should desire to lower it. But it is all that one can truthfully say of the average Christian, that he does not sin *habitually* ; and that is no small thing. A man's character is to be judged by his habitual, not his occasional, actions. To take a very familiar illustration : an ideal bicyclist never has a fall ; the actual bicyclist *habitually* stays on his machine ; but he does not cease to be a bicyclist because occasionally through care-

is born of God doth not commit sin *habitually*.' *Habitually* ! Whence is that ? I read it not. It is not written in the Book. God plainly saith, ' He doth not commit sin ' ; and thou addest, *habitually* ! Who art thou that *mendest* the oracles of God ? —that ' addest to the words of this book ' ? Beware, I beseech thee, lest God ' add to thee all the plagues that are written therein ' ! especially when the comment thou addest is such as quite swallows up the text so that by this *μεθοδεία πλάνης*, this artful method of deceiving, the precious promise is utterly lost ; by this *κυβεία ἀνθρώπων*, this tricking and shuffling of men, the Word of God is made of none effect. O beware, thou that thus takest from the words of this book, that, taking away the whole meaning and spirit from them, leavest only what may indeed be termed a dead letter, lest God take away thy part out of the book of life !

6. Suffer we the Apostle to interpret his own words, by the whole tenor of his discourse. In the fifth verse of this chapter, he had said, ' Ye know that He,' Christ, ' was manifested to take away our sins ; and in Him is no sin.' What is the inference he draws from this ? ' Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not : whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him ' (1 John iii. 6). To his enforcement of this important doctrine, he premises an highly necessary caution : ' Little children, let no man deceive you ' (verse 7) , for many will endeavour so to do , to persuade you that you may be

lessness or over-confidence he takes a tumble. Wesley did not realize the tremendous importance of habit in the formation of character, or he would not have spoken so scornfully of it here. Growth in holiness is really the gradual development of the habit of holiness until it becomes automatic. The student should read chapter ix in Part II of William James's *Principles of Psychology* ; and he will no longer think that it is a trifling thing that a man should not sin habitually.

There is a sort of poetical justice in the fact that the passage (Eph. iv.

14) from which Wesley quotes these Greek phrases is an exhortation to babes in Christ to form Christian *habits*, to grow up into Christ, who is the head, in all things. The baby's hand moves at first spasmodically, and is but slightly under the control of the brain ; but it gradually ' grows up into the head,' establishes nervous connexions with the brain, until it is habitually controlled from that centre, and until that control becomes automatic ; and it can perform, almost without conscious effort, the complicated fingerings of a Liszt rhapsody or a Bach fugue.

unrighteous, that you may commit sin, and yet be children of God: 'He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning.' Then follows, 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.' 'In this,' adds the Apostle, 'the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil.' By this plain mark (the committing or not committing sin) are they distinguished from each other. To the same effect are those words in his fifth chapter: 'We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not' (verse 18).

7. Another fruit of this living faith is peace. For, 'being justified by faith,' having all our sins blotted out, 'we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ' (Rom. v. 1). This indeed our Lord Himself, the night before His death, solemnly bequeathed to all His followers: 'Peace,' saith He, 'I leave with you' (you who 'believe in God,' and 'believe also in Me'), 'My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid' (John xiv. 27). And again: 'These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace' (John xvi. 33). This is that 'peace of God which passeth all understanding,' that serenity of soul which it hath not entered into the heart of a natural man to conceive, and which it is not possible for even the spiritual man to utter. And it is a peace which all the powers of earth and hell are unable to take from him. Waves and storms beat upon it, but they shake it not, for it is founded upon a rock. It keepeth the

7. 'Whatever is, is best': an obvious reminiscence of the last line of the first part of Pope's *Essay on Man*, published in 1732. The line actually runs:

One truth is clear, 'Whatever is, is right.'

John Wesley read Pope's *Epistles* in Savannah on March 14, 1737.

He quotes from his poems ten times in his *Journal*; and this particular passage is quoted on March 14, 1789: 'In the evening I preached in Temple Church; perhaps for the last time. Well, "whatever is, is best."' Charles used it in two of his hymns: in the first verse of Hymn CCIX in *Hymns and Sacred*

hearts and minds of the children of God, at all times and in all places. Whether they are in ease or in pain, in sickness or health, in abundance or want, they are happy in God. In every state they have learned to be content, yea, to give thanks unto God through Christ Jesus, being well assured, that 'whatsoever is, is best,' because it is His will concerning them : so that in all the vicissitudes of life their heart 'standeth fast, believing in the Lord.'

II. 1. A second scriptural mark of those who are born of God, is hope. Thus St. Peter, speaking to all the children of God who were then scattered abroad, saith, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope' (1 Pet. i. 3). 'Ελπίδα ζῶσαν, a *lively* or *living* hope, saith the Apostle ; because there is also a *dead* hope, as well as a dead faith, a hope which is not from God, but from the enemy of God and man ;—as evidently appears by its fruits ; for, as it is the offspring of pride, so it is the parent of every evil word and work, whereas, every man that hath in him this living hope, is 'holy as He that calleth him is holy', every man that can truly say to his brethren in Christ, 'Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and we shall see Him as He is,' 'purifieth himself, even as He is pure.'

2. This hope [,—termed in the Epistle to the Hebrews (x. 22), *πληροφορία πίστεως*, and elsewhere *πληροφορίαν ἐλπίδος* (vi. 11) ; in our translation 'the full assurance of faith, and the full assurance of hope,' expressions the best which our language could afford, although far weaker than those in the original,—as described in Scripture,] implies, first, the testimony of our own spirit, or conscience, that we walk 'in simplicity and godly sincerity' ; secondly [and chiefly] the testimony of the

*Poems*, 1749 (No. 533 in the 1876 Hymn-Book) :

Lord, we Thy will obey,  
And in Thy pleasure rest,  
We, only we, can say,  
Whatever is, is best,—

and in a hymn written at Bristol during the illness of his only little

boy, John James, who died of small-pox in January 1754, first published in *Funeral Hymns*, second series, 1759, and placed in the Revised Hymn-Book of 1876 as No. 914. The fourth verse ends :

Safe in Thy decree we rest,  
Sure whatever is, is best.

Spirit of God, 'bearing witness with,' or to, 'our spirit, that we are the children of God,' 'and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.'

3. Let us well observe what is here taught us by God Himself, touching this glorious privilege of His children. Who is it that is here said to bear witness? Not our spirit only, but another; even the Spirit of God. He it is who 'beareth witness with our spirit.' What is it He beareth witness of? 'That we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ' (Rom. viii. 16, 17), 'if so be that we suffer with Him,' if we deny ourselves, if we take up our cross daily, if we cheerfully endure persecution or reproach for His sake, 'that we may also be glorified together.' And in whom doth the Spirit of God bear this witness? In all who are the children of God. By this very argument does the Apostle prove, in the preceding verses, that they are so: 'As many,' saith he, 'as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.' 'For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father!' It follows, 'the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God' (Rom. viii. 14-16).

4. The variation of the phrase in the fifteenth verse is worthy our observation 'Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father!' *Ye*, as many as are the sons of God, have, in virtue of your sonship, received that self-same Spirit of adoption, whereby *we* cry, Abba, Father. *We*, the apostles, prophets, teachers (for so the word may not improperly be understood), *we*, through whom you have believed, the 'ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.' As *we* and *you* have one Lord, so we have one Spirit: as we have one faith, so we have one hope also. We and you are sealed with one 'Spirit of promise,' the earnest of *your*

II. 4. It is doubtful whether the change of person will carry this interpretation; if the distinction between the *Ye* and the *We* had been intended to be so marked, surely the

pronouns would have been expressed—which they are not. The *We* means rather the whole body of Christian people, not merely the officials of the Church.

and of *our* inheritance : the same Spirit bearing witness with your and with our spirit, ' that we are the children of God.'

5. And thus is the Scripture fulfilled, ' Blessed are they that mourn , for they shall be comforted.' For it is easy to believe, that though sorrow may precede this witness of God's Spirit with our spirit (indeed *must*, in some degree, while we groan under fear, and a sense of the wrath of God abiding on us) ; yet, as soon as any man feeleth it in himself, his ' sorrow is turned into joy.' Whatsoever his pain may have been before ; yet, as soon as that ' hour is come, he remembereth the anguish no more, for joy ' that he is born of God. It may be, many of *you* have now sorrow, because you are ' aliens from the commonwealth of Israel ' ; because you are conscious to yourselves that you have not this Spirit ; that you are ' without hope and without God in the world.' But when the Comforter is come, ' then your heart shall rejoice ' : yea, ' your joy shall be full,' and ' that joy no man taketh from you ' (John xvi. 22). ' We joy in God,' will ye say, ' through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement ', ' by whom we have access into this grace,' this state of grace, of favour, or reconciliation with God, ' wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God ' (Rom. v. 2). ' Ye,' saith St. Peter, whom God hath ' begotten again unto a lively hope, are kept by the power of God unto salvation : wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations ; that the trial of your faith may be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ , in whom, though now ye see Him not, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory ' (1 Pet. i. 5, &c.). Unspeakable indeed ! It is not for the tongue of man to describe this joy in the Holy Ghost. It is ' the hidden manna, which no man knoweth, save he that receiveth it.' But this we know, it not only remains, but overflows, in the depth of affliction. ' Are the consolations of God small ' with His children, when all earthly comforts fail ? Not so. But when sufferings most abound, the consolation of His Spirit doth much more abound ; insomuch that the sons of God ' laugh at destruction when it cometh ' ; at want, pain,



hell, and the grave , as knowing Him who ' hath the keys of death and hell,' and will shortly ' cast them into the bottomless pit ' ; as hearing even now the great voice out of heaven, saying, ' Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes , and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain , for the former things are passed away ' (Rev. xxi. 3, 4).

III. 1. A third scriptural mark of those who are born of God, and the greatest of all, is love ; even ' the love of God shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto them ' (Rom. v. 5). ' Because they are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father ! ' (Gal. iv. 6). By this Spirit, continually looking up to God as their reconciled and loving Father, they cry to Him for their daily bread, for all things needful, whether for their souls or bodies. They continually pour out their hearts before Him, knowing ' they have the petitions which they ask of Him ' (1 John v. 15). Their delight is in Him. He is the joy of their heart , their ' shield,' and their ' exceeding great reward.' The desire of their soul is toward Him , it is their ' meat and drink to do His will ' ; and they are ' satisfied as with marrow and fatness, while their mouth praiseth Him with joyful lips ' (Ps. lxxiii. 5).

2. And, in this sense also, ' every one who loveth Him that begat, loveth Him that is begotten of Him ' (1 John v. 1). His spirit rejoiceth in God his Saviour. He ' loveth the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.' He is so ' joined unto the Lord,' as to be one spirit. His soul hangeth upon Him, and chooseth Him as altogether lovely, ' the chiefest among ten thousand.' He knoweth, he feeleth what that means, ' My beloved is mine, and I am His ' (Cant. ii. 16). ' Thou art fairer than the children of men , full of grace are Thy lips, because God hath anointed Thee for ever ! ' (Ps. xlv. 2).

3. The necessary fruit of this love of God is the love of our

neighbour ; of every soul which God hath made ; not excepting our enemies ; not excepting those who are now ‘ despitefully using and persecuting us ’—a love whereby we love every man as ourselves , as we love our own souls. Nay, our Lord has expressed it still more strongly, teaching us to ‘ love one another, even as He hath loved us.’ Accordingly, the commandment written in the hearts of all those that love God is no other than this, ‘ As I have loved you, so love ye one another.’ Now, ‘ herein perceive we the love of God, in that He laid down His life for us ’ (1 John iii. 16). ‘ We ought,’ then, as the Apostle justly infers, ‘ to lay down our lives for the brethren.’ If we feel ourselves ready to do this, then do we truly love our neighbour. Then ‘ we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we ’ thus ‘ love the brethren ’ (1 John iii. 14). ‘ Hereby know we ’ that we are born of God, that we ‘ dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His ‘ loving ‘ Spirit ’ (iv. 13). For ‘ love is of God ; and every one that ’ thus ‘ loveth is born of God, and knoweth God ’ (iv. 7).

4. But some may possibly ask, ‘ Does not the Apostle say, “ This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments ” ? ’ (1 John v. 3). Yea, and this is the love of our neighbour also, in the same sense as it is the love of God. But what would you infer from hence ? that the keeping the outward commandments is all that is implied in loving God with all your heart, with all your mind, and soul, and strength, and in loving your neighbour as yourself ? that the love of God is not an affection of the soul, but merely an *outward service* ? and that the love of our neighbour is not a disposition of heart, but barely a course of *outward works* ? To mention so wild an interpretation of the Apostle’s words, is sufficiently to confute it. The plain indisputable meaning of the text is,—this is the sign or proof of the love of God, of our keeping the first and great commandment, to keep all the rest of His commandments. For true love, if it be once shed abroad in our heart, will constrain us so to do ; since, whosoever loves God with all his heart, cannot but serve Him with all his strength.

5. A second fruit, then, of the love of God (so far as it can be distinguished from it) is universal obedience to Him we love,

and conformity to His will, obedience to all the commands of God, internal and external; obedience of the heart and of the life: in every temper, and in all manner of conversation. And one of the tempers most obviously implied herein is, the being 'zealous of good works', the hungering and thirsting to do good, in every possible kind, unto all men, the rejoicing to 'spend and be spent for them,' for every child of man; not looking for any recompense in this world, but only in the resurrection of the just.

IV 1. Thus have I plainly laid down those marks of the new birth which I find laid down in Scripture. Thus doth God Himself answer that weighty question, What is it to be born of God? Such, if the appeal be made to the oracles of God, is 'every one that is born of the Spirit.' This it is, in the judgement of the Spirit of God, to be a son or a child of God: it is, so to *believe* in God, through Christ, as 'not to commit sin,' and to enjoy at all times, and in all places, that 'peace of God which passeth all understanding.' It is, so to *hope* in God through the Son of His love, as to have not only the 'testimony of a good conscience,' but also the Spirit of God 'bearing witness with your spirits, that ye are the children of God'; whence cannot but spring the rejoicing [evermore] in Him through whom ye 'have received the atonement.' It is, so to *love* God, who hath thus loved you, as you never did love any creature: so that ye are constrained to love all men as yourselves; with a love not only ever burning in your hearts, but flaming out in all your actions and conversations, and making your whole life one 'labour of love,' one continued obedience to those commands, 'Be ye merciful, as God is merciful'; 'Be ye holy, as I the Lord am holy'; 'Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.'

2. Who then are ye that are *thus* born of God? Ye 'know the things which are given to you of God.' Ye well know that ye are the children of God, and 'can assure your hearts before Him.' And every one of you who has observed these words cannot but feel, and know of a truth, whether at this hour (answer to God, and not to man!) you are thus a

child of God or no. The question is not, what you was made in baptism (do not evade); but, what are you now? Is the Spirit of adoption now in your heart? To your own heart let the appeal be made. I ask not, whether you *was* born of water and of the Spirit; but are you *now* the temple of the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in you? I allow you was 'circumcised with the circumcision of Christ' (as St. Paul emphatically terms baptism), but does the Spirit of Christ and of glory *now* rest upon you? Else, 'your circumcision is become uncircumcision.'

3. Say not then in your heart, 'I *was once* baptized, therefore I *am now* a child of God.' Alas, that consequence will by no means hold. How many are the baptized gluttons and drunkards, the baptized liars and common swearers, the baptized railers and evil-speakers, the baptized whoremongers, thieves, extortioners? What think you? Are these now the children of God? Verily, I say unto you, whosoever you are, unto whom any one of the preceding characters belong, 'Ye are of your father the devil, and the works of your father ye do.' Unto you I call, in the name of Him whom you crucify afresh, and in His words to your circumcised predecessors, 'Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?'

4. How, indeed, except ye be born again? For ye are now dead in trespasses and sins. To say, then, that ye cannot be born again, that there is no new birth but in baptism, is to seal you all under damnation, to consign you to hell, without help, without hope. And perhaps some may think this just

IV 2. 'You *was*.' When 'you' was used as the singular of the pronoun, meaning 'thou,' the singular form 'was' followed it throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. It gives all the force of a personal appeal to this paragraph.

'The circumcision of Christ': see Col. ii. 11, 12.

3. See the fuller discussion of the relation of baptism to the new birth

in Sermon XXXIX, iv. 1 and 2, where it is stated (1) that baptism is not the new birth; and (2) that the new birth does not always accompany baptism; and in section 4 the sinner who urges his baptism as a reason why he should not now seek regeneration is dealt with in a very faithful fashion, and told that by his sins he has already denied his baptism, and that, baptized or not, he must be born again.

and right. In their zeal for the Lord of Hosts, they may say, 'Yea, cut off the sinners, the Amalekites! Let these Gibeonites be utterly destroyed! They deserve no less.' No, nor I, nor you. Mine and your desert, as well as theirs, is hell! and it is mere mercy, free, undeserved mercy, that *we* are not now in unquenchable fire. You will say, 'But we are washed'; we were born again 'of water and of the Spirit.' So *were* they: this, therefore, hinders not at all, but that ye may *now* be even as they. Know ye not, that 'what is highly esteemed of men is an abomination in the sight of God'? Come forth, ye 'saints of the world,' ye that are honoured of men, and see who will cast the first stone at them, at these wretches not fit to live upon the earth, these common harlots, adulterers, murderers. Only learn ye first what that meaneth, 'He that hateth his brother is a murderer' (1 John iii. 15). 'He that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart' (Matt. v. 28). 'Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?' (Jas. iv. 4).

5. 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye' also 'must be born again.' 'Except ye' also 'be born again, ye cannot see the kingdom of God.' Lean no more on the staff of that broken reed, that ye *were* born again in baptism. Who denies that ye were then made children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven? But, notwithstanding this, ye are now children of the devil. Therefore, ye must be born again. And let not Satan put it into your heart to cavil at a word, when the thing is clear. Ye have heard what are the marks of the children of God all ye who have them not on your souls, baptized or unbaptized, must needs receive them, or without doubt ye will perish everlastingly. And if ye have been baptized, your only hope is this,—that those who were made the children of God by baptism, but are now the children of the devil, may yet again receive 'power to become the sons of God', that they

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4. In Jas. iv. 4 the best attested reading is, 'Ye adulteresses, know ye not,' &c., the feminine being used to mean adulterous souls who have

been faithless to their relation to God, which is often expressed under the figure of marriage in the Old Testament.

may receive again what they have lost, even the ' Spirit of adoption, crying in their hearts, Abba, Father ! '

Amen, Lord Jesus ! May every one who prepareth his heart yet again to seek Thy face receive again that Spirit of adoption, and cry out, ' Abba, Father ! ' Let him now again have power so to believe in Thy name as to become a child of God ; as to know and feel he hath ' redemption in Thy blood, even the forgiveness of sins ' ; and that he ' cannot commit sin, because he is born of God.' Let him be now ' begotten again unto a living hope,' so as to ' purify himself as Thou art pure ' ; and ' because he is a son,' let the Spirit of love and of glory rest upon him, cleansing him ' from all filthiness of flesh and spirit,' and teaching him to ' perfect holiness in the fear of God ' !

## SERMON XV

### THE GREAT PRIVILEGE OF THOSE THAT ARE BORN OF GOD

THIS fine practical sermon is evidently intended to modify the uncompromising teaching of the previous discourse on the sinlessness of believers. It bears many marks of being a later composition than that: for example, the clear distinction drawn between justification and regeneration in pars. 1 and 2; the more definite statement that being born again is not 'barely the being baptized'; and the frank admission that sin is possible in those 'whom we cannot deny to have been truly born of God.' Wesley preached from this text at Lambeth on September 23, 1739, 'and showed (to the amazement, it seemed, of many who were present) how "he that is born of God doth not commit sin,"' and at Kendalshire, near Bristol, on January 17, 1740; but I doubt if it was this sermon. It does not occur in the sermon list; though the previous verse is mentioned as a text in 1752. On the whole, the evidence is that it was written in the first instance for publication, and as a supplement to Sermon XIV; though the substance of it may well have been given in the series of studies in this epistle recorded in August 1740 at the Foundery, and in November 1740 at Bristol.

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*Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.*—I JOHN iii. 9.

1. It has been frequently supposed, that the being born of God was all one with the being justified; that the new birth and justification were only different expressions, denoting the same thing—it being certain, on the one hand, that whoever is justified is also born of God, and, on the other, that whoever is born of God is also justified, yea, that both these gifts of God are given to every believer in one and the same moment.

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Par. 1. 'In one point of time,' try were from the nature of the case  
&c. The great majority of the cases instantaneous. Men and women  
of conversion under Wesley's minis- who had been living in open sin or

In one point of time his sins are blotted out, and he is born again of God.

2. But though it be allowed, that justification and the new birth are, in point of time, inseparable from each other, yet they are easily distinguished, as being not the same, but things of a widely different nature. Justification implies only a relative, the new birth a real, change. God in justifying us does something *for* us ; in begetting us again, He does the work *in* us. The former changes our outward relation to God, so that of enemies we become children ; by the latter our inmost souls are changed, so that of sinners we become saints. The

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in complete indifference to religion were suddenly awakened to a sense of their sin and need, and after passing through a period of distressing conviction found immediate peace and joy through trusting in Christ. At first Wesley doubted the possibility of so great a change being wrought in a moment ; but in April 1738 he found in the Scriptures 'scarce any instances there of other than instantaneous conversions' ; and the following day (April 23) he received the evidence of several living witnesses to the fact. His own conversion and that of his brother Charles in May confirmed his conclusion. Whilst modern psychologists are rather disposed to regard conversions of this type as extreme cases, and to emphasize the gradual growth of the religious character in young people who have been brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord as the more normal and ideal type, it must not be forgotten that, though in many cases there is no consciousness of any definite time of conversion, in the majority (at least that is my experience) there has been a day when they consciously accepted Christ as their Saviour. Perhaps that is partly due to the insistence in Methodist

teaching on the need for clear decision and a positive act of faith as the condition of salvation ; and it may be noted that Prof. William James, in *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 227, says : 'For Methodism, unless there have been a crisis of this sort, salvation is only offered, not effectively received, and Christ's sacrifice in so far forth is incomplete. Methodism surely here follows, if not the healthier-minded, yet on the whole the profounder spiritual instinct.'

2. To one who, like St. Paul, has been living a life of alienation from Christ, conversion naturally seems in the first instance the removal of the burden of guilt and condemnation (justification), and the restoration to right relations with God (adoption) ; to another who, like St. John, has never known what it is to be at enmity with the Saviour, the emphasis lies on the new life of joy and power over sin (regeneration) and the new sense of purity (sanctification). But this is a matter of emphasis, not of fact ; and St. John tells us how God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, whilst St. Paul prays for his converts that Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith. As Wesley implies conver-



one restores us to the favour, the other to the image, of God. The one is the taking away the guilt, the other the taking away the power, of sin so that, although they are joined together in point of time, yet are they of wholly distinct natures.

3. The not discerning this, the not observing the wide difference there is between being justified and being born again, has occasioned exceeding great confusion of thought in many who have treated on this subject, particularly when they have attempted to explain this great privilege of the children of God, to show how 'whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.'

4. In order to apprehend this clearly, it may be necessary, first, to consider what is the proper meaning of that expression, 'Whosoever is born of God', and, secondly, to inquire in what sense he 'doth not commit sin.'

I. 1. First, we are to consider, what is the proper meaning of that expression, 'Whosoever is born of God.' And, in general, from all the passages of holy writ wherein this expression, 'the being born of God,' occurs, we may learn that it implies not barely the being baptized, or any outward change whatever, but a vast inward change, a change wrought in the soul, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, a change in the whole manner of our existence, for, from the moment we are born of God, we live in quite another manner than we did before, we are, as it were, in another world.

2. The ground and reason of the expression is easy to be understood. When we undergo this great change, we may,

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sion is one and indivisible in fact, though it may be analysed in thought and its various elements distinguished. It is curious that so earnest a student as Wesley was both of the earlier chapters of Romans and of the first Epistle of John, both of which he frequently took as the subjects of his daily expositions to his societies, should not have realized more clearly than he

appears to have done the difference in the point of view of the two great Apostles as regards the meaning of Sonship.

I. 1. 'Not barely the being baptized.' This is to guard against any possible misunderstanding of what is said in the first paragraph of the previous sermon. For a fuller statement of Wesley's view, see Sermon XXXIX.

with much propriety, be said to be born again, because there is so near a resemblance between the circumstances of the natural and of the spiritual birth, so that to consider the circumstances of the natural birth, is the most easy way to understand the spiritual.

3. The child which is not yet born subsists indeed by the air, as does everything which has life; but *feels* it not, nor anything else, unless in a very dull and imperfect manner. It *hears* little, if at all, the organs of hearing being as yet closed up. It *sees* nothing; having its eyes fast shut, and being surrounded with utter darkness. There are, it may be, some faint beginnings of life, when the time of its birth draws nigh, and some motion consequent thereon, whereby it is distinguished from a mere mass of matter; but it has no *senses*; all these avenues of the soul are hitherto quite shut up. Of consequence, it has scarce any intercourse with this visible world; nor any knowledge, conception, or idea, of the things that occur therein.

4. The reason why he that is not yet born is wholly a stranger to the visible world, is not because it is afar off (it is very nigh; it surrounds him on every side), but, partly, because he has not those senses, they are not yet opened in his soul, whereby alone it is possible to hold commerce with the material world, and partly, because so thick a veil is cast between, through which he can discern nothing.

5. But no sooner is the child born into the world, than he exists in a quite different manner. He now *feels* the air with which he is surrounded, and which pours into him from every side, as fast as he alternately breathes it back, to sustain the flame of life and hence springs a continual increase of

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2. This analogy between physical and spiritual birth is admirably worked out; and especially the point as to the need for spiritual respiration for the continuance of the new life. It is no mere fanciful analogy, but an excellent case of natural law in the spiritual world. Indeed, Wesley might have gone a step further, and shown that the

newly-born child is not only sensible of the world into which he is born, but is also capable of activity in relation to it. He has a motor as well as a sensory equipment, which is strictly analogous to the power over sin exercised by the regenerate soul. He is not a passive recipient, but an active agent.

strength, of motion, and of sensation, all the bodily senses being now awakened, and furnished with their proper objects.

His eyes are now opened to perceive the light, which, silently flowing in upon them, discovers not only itself, but an infinite variety of things, with which before he was wholly unacquainted. His ears are unclosed, and sounds rush in with endless diversity. Every sense is employed upon such objects as are peculiarly suitable to it, and by these inlets the soul, having an open intercourse with the visible world, acquires more and more knowledge of sensible things, of all the things which are under the sun.

6. So it is with him that is born of God. Before that great change is wrought, although he subsists by Him, in whom all that have life 'live, and move, and have their being,' yet he is not *sensible* of God; he does not *feel*, he has no inward consciousness of His presence. He does not perceive that divine breath of life, without which he cannot subsist a moment: nor is he sensible of any of the things of God, they make no impression upon his soul. God is continually calling to him from on high, but he heareth not, his ears are shut, so that the 'voice of the charmer' is lost on him, 'charm he never so wisely.' He seeth not the things of the Spirit of God, the eyes of his understanding being closed, and utter darkness covering his whole soul, surrounding him on every side. It is true he may have some faint dawnings of life, some small beginnings of spiritual motion; but as yet he has no spiritual senses capable of discerning spiritual objects, consequently, he 'discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God, he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned.'

7. Hence he has scarce any knowledge of the invisible world, as he has scarce any intercourse with it. Not that it is afar off no he is in the midst of it, it encompasses him round about. The *other world*, as we usually term it, is not far from every one of us it is above, and beneath, and on every side. Only the natural man discerneth it not, partly, because he has no spiritual senses, whereby alone we can discern the things of God; partly, because so thick a veil is interposed as he knows not how to penetrate.

8. But when he is born of God, born of the Spirit, how is the manner of his existence changed ! His whole soul is now sensible of God, and he can say, by sure experience, 'Thou art about my bed, and about my path' ; I feel Thee in all my ways : 'Thou besettest me behind and before, and layest Thy hand upon me.' The spirit or breath of God is immediately inspired, breathed into the new-born soul ; and the same breath which comes from, returns to, God : as it is continually received by faith, so it is continually rendered back by love, by prayer, and praise, and thanksgiving, love, and praise, and prayer being the breath of every soul which is truly born of God. And by this new kind of spiritual respiration, spiritual life is not only sustained, but increased day by day, together with spiritual strength, and motion, and sensation ; all the senses of the soul being now awake, and capable of discerning spiritual good and evil.

9. 'The eyes of his understanding' are now 'open,' and he 'seeth Him that is invisible.' He sees what is 'the exceeding greatness of His power' and of His love towards them that believe. He sees that God is merciful to him a sinner, that he is reconciled through the Son of His love. He clearly perceives both the pardoning love of God, and all His 'exceeding great and precious promises.' 'God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined,' and doth shine, 'in his heart,' to enlighten him with 'the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' All the darkness is now passed away, and he abides in the light of God's countenance.

10. His ears are now opened, and the voice of God no longer calls in vain. He hears and obeys the heavenly calling, he knows the voice of his Shepherd. All his spiritual senses being now awakened, he has a clear intercourse with the invisible world ; and hence he knows more and more of the things which before it could not 'enter into his heart to conceive.' He now knows what the peace of God is, what is joy in the Holy Ghost ; what the love of God which is shed abroad in the hearts of them that believe in Him through Christ Jesus. Thus the veil being removed which before

interrupted the light and voice, the knowledge and love of God, he who is born of the Spirit dwelleth in love, 'dwelleth in God, and God in him.'

II. 1. Having considered the meaning of that expression, 'Whosoever is born of God,' it remains, in the second place, to inquire, in what sense he 'doth not commit sin.'

Now one who is so born of God, as hath been above described, who continually receives into his soul the breath of life from God, the gracious influence of His Spirit, and continually renders it back; one who thus believes and loves, who by faith perceives the continual actings of God upon his spirit, and, by a kind of spiritual reaction returns the grace he receives, in unceasing love, and praise, and prayer, not only doth not commit sin, while he thus keepeth himself, but so long as this 'seed remaineth in him, he cannot sin, because he is born of God.'

2. By sin, I here understand outward sin, according to the plain, common acceptation of the word, an actual, voluntary transgression of the law, of the revealed, written law of God; of any commandment of God, acknowledged to be such at the time that it is transgressed. But 'whosoever is born of God,' while he abideth in faith and love, and in the spirit of prayer and thanksgiving, not only doth not, but cannot, thus commit sin. So long as he thus believeth in God through Christ, and loves Him, and is pouring out his heart before Him, he cannot voluntarily transgress any command of God, either by speaking or acting what he knows God hath forbidden: so long that seed which remaineth in him, that loving, praying, thankful faith, compels him to refrain from whatsoever he knows to be an abomination in the sight of God.

3. But here a difficulty will immediately occur; and one that to many has appeared insuperable, and induced them

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II. 1. This sentence is quoted in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as the earliest example of the use of 'reaction' in this sense; 'the influence which a thing, acted upon by another, exercises in return upon

the agent.' The older meaning is 'repulsion exerted in opposition to impact or pressure.'

2. This restriction of the meaning of sin is somewhat arbitrary; but see section 7.

to deny the plain assertion of the Apostle, and give up the privilege of the children of God.

It is plain, in fact, that those whom we cannot deny to have been truly born of God (the Spirit of God having given us in His Word this infallible testimony concerning them), nevertheless, not only could, but did, commit sin, even gross, outward sin. They did transgress the plain, known laws of God, speaking or acting what they knew He had forbidden.

4. Thus David was unquestionably born of God or ever he was anointed king over Israel. He knew in whom he had believed; 'he was strong in faith, giving glory to God.' 'The Lord,' saith he, 'is my Shepherd; therefore can I lack nothing. He shall feed me in green pastures, and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me' (Ps. xxiii. 1, &c.). He was filled with love; such as often constrained him to cry out, 'I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my stony rock, and my defence, the horn also of my salvation, and my refuge' (Ps. xviii. 1, 2). He was a man of prayer, pouring out his soul before God in all circumstances of life; and abundant in praises and thanksgiving 'Thy praise,' saith he, 'shall be ever in my mouth' (Ps. xxxiv. 1): 'Thou art my God, and I will thank Thee: Thou art my God, and I

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4. Of the psalms here quoted, one (Ps. xviii) is certainly by David; xxiii and xxxiv are assigned to him in the titles in the A.V.; cxviii is anonymous, and is judged by Dr. Davison to belong to the period after the Captivity. My own conviction is that the critics have not taken sufficiently into account the use of the Book of Psalms as the hymn-book of the Jewish Church, and the modifications that take place in successive editions of a hymn-book to suit altered times and circumstances. The growth of the Methodist Hymn-Book is the best analogy I know to the growth of

the Book of Psalms. Thus the first line of verse 5 in Hymn 397 of the 1876 Hymn-Book, 'Though eighteen hundred years are past,' &c., does not prove that the hymn was not written by Charles Wesley; any more than a reference to the Captivity in a psalm proves that it is post-exilic, or to the Temple that it is not Davidic in origin. However, these questions had not arisen in Wesley's time; and he naturally accepts the titles as settling the question. In any case, there can be no doubt as to the strong religious strain in David's character. The quotations are from the P.-B. version.

will praise Thee' (Ps. cxviii. 28). And yet such a child of God could and did commit sin; yea, the horrid sins of adultery and murder.

5. And even after the Holy Ghost was more largely given, after 'life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel,' we want not instances of the same melancholy kind, which were also doubtless written for our instruction. Thus he who (probably from his selling all that he had, and bringing the price for the relief of his poor brethren) was by the Apostles themselves 'surnamed Barnabas,' that is, 'the son of consolation' (Acts iv. 36, 37), who was so honoured at Antioch, as to be selected with Saul out of all the disciples, to carry their relief unto the brethren in Judea (Acts xi. 29, 30), this Barnabas, who, at his return from Judea, was, by the peculiar direction of the Holy Ghost, solemnly 'separated from the other prophets and teachers, for the work whereunto God had called him' (xiii. 1-4), even to accompany the great Apostle among the Gentiles, and to be his fellow labourer in every place,—nevertheless, was afterwards so sharp (xv. 35, 39), in his contention with St. Paul (because he 'thought it not good to take with them John,' in his visiting the brethren a second time, 'who had departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work') that he himself also departed from the work; that he 'took John, and sailed unto Cyprus' (xv. 39); forsaking him to whom he had been in so immediate a manner joined by the Holy Ghost.

6. An instance more astonishing than both these is given by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians. When Peter, the

5. 'Barnabas' is more correctly interpreted 'Son of Exhortation.' The conflict of judgement as to John Mark's fitness for missionary work between Barnabas and Paul does not necessarily involve any sin on either side. Good men may differ in opinion and may express their differences strongly, and act upon them, too, without committing sin. The word used of this contention is used also of Paul's indignation

at the sight of the idols at Athens; and is applied in the LXX to the righteous anger of God (Deut. xxix. 28; Jer. xxxix. 37). If difference of opinion as to a brother's suitability for a particular piece of work is sinful, the Lord have mercy on the Stationing Committee! A better case might have been made out against Barnabas from his conduct at Antioch, referred to in the next paragraph.

aged, the zealous, the first of the apostles, one of the three most highly favoured by his Lord, 'was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles'—the Heathens converted to the Christian faith—as having been peculiarly taught of God, that he 'should not call any man common or unclean' (Acts x. 28). 'But when they were come, he separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of the Gentiles'—not regarding the ceremonial law of Moses—'why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews'? (Gal. ii. 11, &c.). Here is also plain, undeniable sin committed by one who was undoubtedly born of God. But how can this be reconciled with the assertion of St. John, if taken in the obvious literal meaning, that 'whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin'?

7. I answer, What has been long observed is this: so long as 'he that is born of God keepeth himself' (which he is able to do by the grace of God), 'the wicked one toucheth him not', but if he keepeth not himself, if he abideth not in the faith, he may commit sin even as another man.

It is easy therefore to understand, how any of these children of God might be moved from his own steadfastness, and yet the great truth of God, declared by the Apostle, remain steadfast and unshaken. He did not 'keep himself,' by that grace of God which was sufficient for him. He fell, step by step, first, into negative, inward sin, not 'stirring up the gift of God

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7. This analysis of the successive stages of the believer's fall into sin is true to experience, as, alas! we all know too well. The only point that provokes criticism is the admission that he may fall into positive inward sin before he loses his faith. The presence of a stimulus to wrong

desire inevitably awakens the thought of its gratification; but there is no sin as yet. But if the attention is voluntarily withdrawn from God and turned to the gratification of desire, so as to dwell upon it with satisfaction, positive inward sin is committed; but not before



which was in him,' not 'watching unto prayer,' not 'pressing on to the mark of the prize of his high calling' then into positive inward sin, inclining to wickedness with his heart, giving way to some evil desire or temper: next he lost his faith, his sight of a pardoning God, and consequently his love of God; and, being then weak and like another man, he was capable of committing even outward sin.

8. To explain this by a particular instance: David was born of God, and saw God by faith. He loved God in sincerity. He could truly say, 'Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth,' neither person nor thing, 'that I desire in comparison of Thee.' But still there remained in his heart that corruption of nature, which is the seed of all evil.

'He was walking upon the roof of his house' (2 Sam. xi. 2), probably praising the God whom his soul loved, when he looked down, and saw Bathsheba. He felt a temptation, a thought which tended to evil. The Spirit of God did not fail to convince him of this. He doubtless heard and knew the warning voice; but he yielded in some measure to the thought, and the temptation began to prevail over him. Hereby his spirit was sullied; he saw God still; but it was more dimly than before. He loved God still; but not in the same degree, not with the same strength and ardour of affection. Yet God checked him again, though His Spirit was grieved; and His voice, though fainter and fainter, still whispered, 'Sin lieth at the door, look unto Me and be thou saved.' But he would not hear, he looked again, not unto God, but unto the forbidden object, till nature was superior to grace, and kindled lust in his soul.

faith, the vision of God, has been to some extent lost. Or perhaps it would be better to say that the loss of faith and the fixing of the attention on the forbidden gratification are strictly contemporaneous, and are indeed two aspects of one mental attitude. It is rather astonishing, in view of his earlier opinion

as to the nature of sin, that Wesley should here seem to admit that inward sin is consistent with the full possession of faith. He speaks more consistently in Sermon XLVI, iv. 13, 'A man may be in God's favour though he feel sin; but not if he yields to it.'

8. The horse rushing into the

The eye of his mind was now closed again, and God vanished out of his sight. Faith, the divine, supernatural intercourse with God, and the love of God, ceased together : he then rushed on as a horse into the battle, and knowingly committed the outward sin.

9. You see the unquestionable progress from grace to sin : thus it goes on, from step to step. (1) The divine seed of loving, conquering faith, remains in him that is born of God. 'He keepeth himself,' by the grace of God, and 'cannot commit sin.' (2) A temptation arises ; whether from the world, the flesh, or the devil, it matters not. (3) The Spirit of God gives him warning that sin is near, and bids him more abundantly watch unto prayer. (4) He gives way, in some degree, to the temptation, which now begins to grow pleasing to him. (5) The Holy Spirit is grieved, his faith is weakened ; and his love of God grows cold. (6) The Spirit reproves him more sharply, and saith, 'This is the way ; walk thou in it.' (7) He turns away from the painful voice of God, and listens to the pleasing voice of the tempter. (8) Evil desire begins and spreads in his soul, till faith and love vanish away : he is then capable of committing outward sin, the power of the Lord being departed from him.

10. To explain this by another instance : the Apostle Peter was full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and hereby keeping himself, he had a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man.

Walking thus in simplicity and godly sincerity, 'before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles,' knowing that what God had cleansed was not common or unclean.

But 'when they were come,' a temptation arose in his heart, 'to fear those of the circumcision' (the Jewish converts, who were zealous for circumcision and the other rites

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battle used to be frequently associated in our old Methodist prayer-meetings with the greedy ox that lappeth up water as a type of the reckless sinner. The phrase is not

scriptural, though it probably took its rise from the recollection of Job's war-horse who 'smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains and the shouting.'

of the Mosaic law), and regard the favour and praise of these men, more than the praise of God.

He was warned by the Spirit that sin was near : nevertheless, he yielded to it in some degree, even to sinful fear of man, and his faith and love were proportionably weakened.

God reproved him again for giving place to the devil. Yet he would not hearken to the voice of his Shepherd, but gave himself up to that slavish fear, and thereby quenched the Spirit.

Then God disappeared, and faith and love being extinct, he committed the outward sin : *walking not uprightly*, not 'according to the truth of the gospel,' he 'separated himself' from his Christian brethren, and by his evil example, if not advice also, 'compelled even the Gentiles to live after the manner of the Jews' ; to entangle themselves again with that 'yoke of bondage,' from which 'Christ had set them free.'

Thus it is unquestionably true, that he who is born of God, keeping himself, doth not, cannot commit sin, and yet, if he keepeth not himself, he may commit all manner of sin with greediness.

III. 1. From the preceding considerations we may learn, first, to give a clear and incontestable answer to a question which has frequently perplexed many who were sincere of heart : 'Does sin precede or follow the loss of faith ? Does a child of God first commit sin, and thereby lose his faith ? Or does he lose his faith first, before he can commit sin ?'

I answer, Some sin of omission, at least, must necessarily precede the loss of faith, some inward sin but the loss of faith must precede the committing outward sin.

The more any believer examines his own heart, the more

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III. 1. That some sin of omission must necessarily precede the loss of faith cannot be maintained ; unless it means the failure to turn at once to God in the moment of temptation. A man strikes me suddenly ; and instinctively I strike back at him. It is true that if, on receiving the

blow, I had at once fixed my attention on God, I should have been able to restrain myself ; but it is rather pedantic to call this a sin of omission. Probably what Wesley means is that the cause of the failure to turn to God is that there has been some neglect of prayer and medita-

will he be convinced of this: that faith, working by love, excludes both inward and outward sin from a soul watching unto prayer, that nevertheless we are even then liable to temptation, particularly to the sin that did easily beset us, that if the loving eye of the soul be steadily fixed on God, the temptation soon vanishes away but if not, if we are *ἐξελκόμενοι* (as the Apostle James speaks, chap. i. 14), *drawn out* of God by our *own desire*, and *δελεαζόμενοι*, *caught by the bait* of present or promised pleasures, then that desire, conceived in us, brings forth sin, and having by that inward sin destroyed our faith, it casts us headlong into the snare of the devil, so that we may commit any outward sin whatever.

2. From what has been said, we may learn, secondly, what the life of God in the soul of a believer is; wherein it properly consists, and what is immediately and necessarily implied therein. It immediately and necessarily implies the continual inspiration of God's Holy Spirit, God's breathing into the soul, and the soul's breathing back what it first receives from God, a continual action of God upon the soul, and a reaction of the soul upon God; an unceasing presence of God, the loving, pardoning God, manifested to the heart, and perceived by faith, and an unceasing return of love, praise and prayer, offering up all the thoughts of our hearts, all the words of our tongues, all the works of our hands, all our body, soul, and spirit, to be a holy sacrifice, acceptable unto God in Christ Jesus.

3. And hence we may, thirdly, infer the absolute necessity

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tion and the means of grace, which has weakened the sense of the presence of God.

'So that we may commit any outward sin whatever.' Again Wesley seems to regard a single lapse into outward sin as a complete forfeiture of the favour of God, and a loss of all that we have gained by conversion. This is mischievous doctrine. A man's character is to be judged by his habitual acts, not by his occasional lapses; he does not need to

be born again after every slip into sin. 'He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is generally [as a whole] clean.' As William James says in *Var. of Relig. Exper.*, p. 257, 'That it [the conversion experience] should for even a short time show a human being what the high-water mark of his spiritual capacity is, this is what constitutes its importance—an importance which backsliding cannot diminish.'

of this reaction of the soul (whatsoever it be called), in order to the continuance of the divine life therein. For it plainly appears, God does not continue to act upon the soul, unless the soul reacts upon God. He prevents us indeed with the blessings of His goodness. He first loves us, and manifests Himself unto us. While we are yet afar off, He calls us to Himself, and shines upon our hearts. But if we do not then love Him who first loved us; if we will not hearken to His voice, if we turn our eye away from Him, and will not attend to the light which He pours in upon us; His Spirit will not always strive: He will gradually withdraw, and leave us to the darkness of our own hearts. He will not continue to breathe into our soul, unless our soul breathes toward Him again, unless our love, and prayer, and thanksgiving return to Him, a sacrifice wherewith He is well pleased.

4. Let us learn, lastly, to follow that direction of the great Apostle, 'Be not high-minded, but fear.' Let us fear sin, more than death or hell. Let us have a jealous (though not painful) fear, lest we should lean to our own deceitful hearts. 'Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall.' Even he who now standeth fast in the grace of God, in the faith that overcometh the world, may nevertheless fall into inward sin, and thereby 'make shipwreck of his faith.' And how easily then will outward sin regain its dominion over him! Thou, therefore, O man of God! watch always, that thou mayest always hear the voice of God! Watch, that thou mayest pray without ceasing, at all times, and in all places, pouring out thy heart before Him! So shalt thou always believe, and always love, and never commit sin.

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3. 'Prevents'; i.e. anticipates, goes before us.

## SERMONS XVI-XXVIII

As a practical manual of Christian conduct, it would be hard to find anything so good as this noble series of thirteen sermons. Nothing could prove more conclusively that Wesley's enthusiastic preaching of justification by faith gave no excuse to his followers for 'making void the law through faith.' Their ethical teaching glows throughout with spiritual fervour; and their appeal to the conscience is irresistible. They are a candle of the Lord, searching the innermost parts of the soul; and in reading them once again, I have been driven to my knees in penitence and confession, many and many a time.

As an exposition of the Sermon on the Mount, they have certain obvious deficiencies. There is no attempt to show the relation of our Lord's teaching to the Old Testament Scriptures and to the current thought of His own time. Nor is there any discussion of the relation of St. Matthew's version to that given in St. Luke's Gospel. It is now generally agreed that we have in Luke vi. 20-49 a report of the discourse as it was delivered by our Lord; and that the author of the first Gospel (Matthew or another) has incorporated with it many sayings of our Lord spoken at other times and under other circumstances, which in his judgement threw light upon various points dealt with; and made the survey of the ethics of the kingdom more complete. Moreover, he has given a deeper spiritual meaning to some of the sayings than they conveyed in their first form; as when he changes 'Blessed are ye poor' to 'Blessed are the poor in spirit.' But we who believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures recognize in these additions and modifications the comment of the Spirit of Christ upon His words; and His comments have no less authority than the text on which they are based. And if Wesley finds in the Beatitudes, as he does, a summary of the Christian life, beginning with repentance and proceeding through justification to entire sanctification, it is no real objection to say that the meaning he attaches to them cannot have been that which was suggested to the minds of the first hearers of the sermon on the hill in Galilee; for he, too, wrote under the influence of the same Spirit, who has been given to guide Christ's people into all the truth.

The foundation of these sermons was laid on the good ship *Simmonds* during Wesley's voyage to Georgia in 1735. We have Ingham's authority for saying that 'during the voyage Wesley went over our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount.' In the *Journal* for April 1, 1739, Wesley says: 'In the evening, Mr. Whitefield being gone [i.e. to visit the Baldwin Street Society; he did not leave Bristol till the next morn-

ing], I began expounding our Lord's Sermon on the Mount (one pretty remarkable precedent of field-preaching, though I suppose there were churches at that time also) to a little society which was accustomed to meet once or twice a week in Nicholas Street.' This was in Bristol, whither he had come the day before to meet Whitefield. On February 17 Whitefield had for the first time preached in the open air to some two hundred colliers at Kingswood; and had continued his outdoor services during the intervening six weeks. Wesley heard him at the Bowling Green this same Sunday morning. 'I could scarce reconcile myself at first,' he says, 'to this strange way of preaching in the fields, having been all my life (till very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin if it had not been done in a church.' However, on Monday, April 2, he says: 'At four in the afternoon I submitted to be more vile, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining to the city to about three thousand people.' The text was Isa. lxi. 1, 2; the place was in St. Philip's Marsh near the junction of Old Bread Street and Cheese Lane, then called the Brickyard, and now occupied by the goods-yard of the Midland Railway. On Saturday, July 21, he records: 'I began expounding, a second time, our Lord's Sermon on the Mount. In the morning, Sunday the 22nd, as I was explaining "Blessed are the poor in spirit" to about three thousand people, we had a fair opportunity of showing all men what manner of spirit we were of; for in the middle of the sermon the pressgang came, and seized on one of the hearers.' This service was held on the Bowling Green in the heart of Bristol. Again in October he went through the Sermon on the Mount and the Epistles of St. John 'in Temple Backs,' still in Bristol. On Monday, June 16, 1740, he expounded Matt. v at Mr. Crouch's in London; and in September he went to get a little retirement to the vicarage at Bexley, a village in Kent, about a dozen miles south-east of London, where his old friend the Rev. Henry Piers was the incumbent; 'where in the mornings and evenings I expounded the Sermon on the Mount.' The exposition was repeated once more at Kingswood in January 1741. In June 1742, on Sunday the 13th, he relates: 'At six I preached for the last time in Epworth churchyard to a vast multitude gathered together from all points, on the beginning of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount. I continued among them for near three hours; and yet we scarce knew how to part.' There are many records of the preaching of individual sermons from the series to the end of Wesley's life. The first nine were published in Vol. II of the sermons in 1748; the remaining four in Vol. III in 1750. No. XII was published separately in 1758 under the title of *A Caution against False Prophets, particularly Recommended to the People called Methodists*.

## SERMON XVI

### UPON OUR LORD'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT

#### DISCOURSE I

THIS particular sermon is recorded as having been preached near Chepstow on October 15, 1739, and at Whitechapel on June 21, 1740. On September 17, 1739, Wesley preached at Plaistow on 'Blessed are they that mourn.' 'It pleased God,' he says, 'to give us in that hour two living instances of that piercing sense both of the guilt and power of sin, that dread of the wrath of God, and that full conviction of man's inability either to remove the power, or atone for the guilt, of sin (called by the world despair); in which properly consist that poverty of spirit and mourning which are the gate of Christian blessedness.' He preached again from this text at Wapping on July 11, 1740.

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*And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain : and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him :*

*And He opened His mouth, and taught them, saying,*

*Blessed are the poor in spirit : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are they that mourn : for they shall be comforted.*

—MATT. v. 1-4.

I. OUR Lord had now gone 'about all Galilee' (Matt. iv 23), beginning at the time 'when John was cast into prison' (verse 12), not only 'teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom,' but likewise 'healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.' It was a natural consequence of this, that 'there followed Him great multitudes from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from the region beyond Jordan' (verse 25). 'And seeing the multitudes,' whom no synagogue could contain, even had there been any at hand, 'He went up into a mountain,' where there was room for all that



came unto Him from every quarter. 'And when He was set,' as the manner of the Jews was, 'His disciples came unto Him. And He opened His mouth' (an expression denoting the beginning of a solemn discourse), 'and taught them, saying.'

2. Let us observe, who it is that is here speaking, that we may take heed how we hear. It is the Lord of heaven and earth, the Creator of all, who, as such, has a right to dispose of all His creatures, the Lord our Governor, whose kingdom is from everlasting, and ruleth over all, the great Lawgiver, who can well enforce all His laws, being 'able to save and to destroy,' yea, to punish with 'everlasting destruction from His presence and from the glory of His power.' It is the eternal Wisdom of the Father, who knoweth whereof we are made and understands our inmost frame, who knows how we stand related to God, to one another, to every creature which God hath made, and, consequently, how to adapt every law He prescribes to all the circumstances wherein He hath placed us. It is He who is 'loving unto every man, whose mercy is over all His works'; the God of love, who, having emptied Himself of His eternal glory, is come forth from His Father to declare His will to the children of men, and then goeth again to the Father; who is sent of God 'to open the eyes of the blind, and to give light to them that sit in darkness.' It is the great Prophet of the Lord, concerning whom God had solemnly declared long ago, 'Whosoever will not hearken unto My words which He shall speak in My name, I will require it of him' (Deut. xviii. 19); or, as the Apostle expresses it, 'Every soul which will not hear that Prophet shall be destroyed from among the people' (Acts iii. 23).

3. And what is it which He is teaching? The Son of God, who came from heaven, is here showing us the way to heaven, to the place which He hath prepared for us; the glory He had before the world began. He is teaching us the true way to life everlasting; the royal way which leads to the kingdom; and the only true way—for there is none besides: all other paths lead to destruction. From the character of the Speaker, we are well assured that He hath declared the full and perfect will of God. He hath uttered not one tittle too much—nothing

more than He had received of the Father, nor too little—He hath not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God, much less hath He uttered anything wrong, anything contrary to the will of Him that sent Him. All His words are true and right concerning all things, and shall stand fast for ever and ever.

And we may easily remark, that in explaining and confirming these faithful and true sayings, He takes care to refute not only the mistakes of the Scribes and Pharisees, which then were the false comments whereby the Jewish teachers of that age had perverted the Word of God, but all the practical mistakes that are inconsistent with salvation, which should ever arise in the Christian church; all the comments whereby the Christian teachers (so called) of any age or nation should pervert the Word of God, and teach unwary souls to seek death in the error of their life.

4. And hence we are naturally led to observe, whom it is that He is here teaching. Not the Apostles alone: if so, He had no need to have gone up into the mountain. A room in the house of Matthew, or any of His disciples, would have contained the twelve. Nor does it in any wise appear that the disciples who came unto Him were the twelve only. *Οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ*, without any force put upon the expression, may be understood of all who desired to learn of Him. But to put this out of all question, to make it undeniably plain that where it is said, 'He opened His mouth and taught them,' the word *them* includes all the multitudes who went up with Him into the mountain, we need only observe the concluding verses of the seventh chapter: 'And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the multitudes (*οἱ ὄχλοι*) were astonished at His doctrine,' or teaching; 'for He taught them,' the multitudes, 'as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.'

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Par. 4. So Votaw, in article in *Hastings' Dict. of the Bible* (extra vol.): 'The sermon is not addressed exclusively or specifically to the newly appointed apostles. It contains no

trace of esoteric teaching. There is no portion of the discourse which does not pertain equally to all of Jesus's followers, present and future.'

Nor was it only those multitudes who were with Him on the mount, to whom He now taught the way of salvation ; but all the children of men ; the whole race of mankind , the children that were yet unborn ; all the generations to come, even to the end of the world, who should ever hear the words of this life.

5. And this all men allow, with regard to some parts of the ensuing discourse. No man, for instance, denies that what is said of poverty of spirit relates to all mankind. But many have supposed, that other parts concerned only the Apostles, or the first Christians, or the ministers of Christ , and were never designed for the generality of men, who, consequently, have nothing at all to do with them.

But may we not justly inquire, who told them this, that some parts of this discourse concerned only the Apostles, or the Christians of the apostolic age, or the ministers of Christ ? Bare assertions are not a sufficient proof to establish a point of so great importance. Has then our Lord Himself taught us, that some parts of His discourse do not concern all mankind ? Without doubt, had it been so, He would have told us , He could not have omitted so necessary an information. But has He told us so ? Where ? In the discourse itself ? No , here is not the least intimation of it. Has He said so elsewhere ? in any other of His discourses ? Not one word so much as glancing this way can we find in anything He ever spoke, either to the multitudes, or to His disciples. Has any one of the Apostles, or other inspired writers, left such an instruction upon record ? No such thing. No assertion of this kind is to be found in all the oracles of God. Who then are the men who are so much wiser than God—wise so far above that is written ?

6. Perhaps they will say, that the reason of the thing requires such a restriction to be made. If it does, it must be on one of these two accounts ; because, without such a restriction, the discourse would either be apparently absurd, or would contradict some other scripture. But this is not the case. It will plainly appear, when we come to examine the several particulars, that there is no absurdity at all in applying all

which our Lord hath here delivered to all mankind. Neither will it infer any contradiction to anything else He has delivered, nor to any other scripture whatever. Nay, it will farther appear, that either all the parts of this discourse are to be applied to men in general, or no part, seeing they are all connected together, all joined as the stones in an arch, of which you cannot take one away, without destroying the whole fabric.

7. We may, lastly, observe, how our Lord teaches here. And surely, as at all times, so particularly at this, He speaks 'as never man spake.' Not as the holy men of old, although they also spoke 'as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.' Not as Peter, or James, or John, or Paul: they were indeed wise master-builders in His Church; but still in this, in the degrees of heavenly wisdom, the servant is not as his Lord. No, nor even as Himself at any other time, or on any other occasion. It does not appear, that it was ever His design, at any other time or place, to lay down at once the whole plan of His religion, to give us a full prospect of Christianity, to describe at large the nature of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. Particular branches of this He has indeed described, on a thousand different occasions, but never, besides here, did He give, of set purpose, a general view of the whole. Nay, we have nothing else of this kind in all the Bible, unless one should except that short sketch of holiness delivered by God in those ten words or commandments to Moses, on mount Sinai. But even here how wide a difference is there between one and the other! 'Even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth' (2 Cor. iii. 10).

8. Above all, with what amazing love does the Son of God here reveal His Father's will to man! He does not bring us again 'to the mount that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest.' He does not speak as when He 'thundered out of heaven', when the Highest 'gave His thunder, hailstones, and coals of fire.' He now addresses us with His still, small voice,—'Blessed,' or happy, 'are the poor in spirit.' Happy are the mourners; the meek; those that

hunger after righteousness ; the merciful , the pure in heart happy in the end, and in the way , happy in this life, and in life everlasting ! As if He had said, ' Who is he that lusteth to live, and would fain see good days ? Behold, I show you the thing which your soul longeth for ! See the way you have so long sought in vain ; the way of pleasantness ; the path to calm, joyous peace, to heaven below, and heaven above ! '

9. At the same time, with what authority does He teach ! Well might they say, ' Not as the Scribes.' Observe the manner (but it cannot be expressed in words), the air, with which He speaks ! Not as Moses, the servant of God ; not as Abraham, His friend ; not as any of the prophets ; nor as any of the sons of men. It is something more than human ; more than can agree to any created being. It speaks the Creator of all ! A God, a God appears ! Yea, ' *O'ΩN*, the Being of beings, *JEHOVAH*, the Self-existent, the Supreme, the God who is over all blessed for ever.

10. This divine discourse, delivered in the most excellent method, every subsequent part illustrating those that precede, is commonly, and not improperly, divided into three principal branches : the first contained in the fifth, the second in the sixth, and the third in the seventh chapter. In the first, the sum of all true religion is laid down in eight particulars, which are explained, and guarded against the false glosses of man, in the following parts of the fifth chapter. In the second are rules for that right intention which we are to preserve in all our outward actions, unmixed with worldly desires, or anxious

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8. ' Who is he that lusteth ? ' &c. The Prayer-Book version of Ps. xxxiv. 12. ' Lusteth ' is used in its old sense of desireth eagerly.

9. ' Not as the Scribes.' The better reading is ' their Scribes.' There is no thought of Moses or the Prophets ; the Scribes of our Lord's time are referred to, and the point is that they always rested on precedent and authority, whereas our Lord said ' I say unto you,' as having Himself authority to speak.

10. Votaw's analysis is as follows :  
 Theme : The Ideal Life, or the True Righteousness.  
 A. The ideal life described as to—  
   (a) its characteristics, v. 1-12.  
   (b) its mission, v. 13-16.  
 B. Its relation to the earlier Hebrew ideal, v. 17-20.  
 C. Its outworkings.  
   (a) in deeds and motives, v. 21-48.  
   (b) in real religious worship, vi. 1-18.  
   (c) in trust and self-devotion, vi. 19-34.  
   (d) in treatment of others, vii. 1-12.  
 D. The duty of Living the Ideal Life, vii. 13-27.

cares for even the necessities of life. In the third are cautions against the main hindrances of religion, closed with an application of the whole.

I. 1. Our Lord first lays down the sum of all true religion in eight particulars, which He explains and guards against the false glosses of men, to the end of the fifth chapter.

Some have supposed that He designed, in these, to point out the several stages of the Christian course—the steps which a Christian successively takes in his journey to the promised land; others, that all the particulars here set down belong at all times to every Christian. And why may we not allow both the one and the other? What inconsistency is there between them? It is undoubtedly true, that both poverty of spirit, and every other temper which is here mentioned, are at all times found, in a greater or less degree, in every real Christian. And it is equally true, that real Christianity always begins in poverty of spirit, and goes on in the order here set down, till the 'man of God is made perfect.' We begin at the lowest of these gifts of God; yet so as not to relinquish this, when we are called of God to come up higher; but 'whereunto we have already attained, we hold fast,' while we press on to what is yet before, to the highest blessings of God in Christ Jesus.

2. The foundation of all is poverty of spirit: here, therefore, our Lord begins: 'Blessed,' saith He, 'are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'

It may not improbably be supposed, that our Lord looked on those who were round about Him, and, observing that not

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I. 1. The number of the Beatitudes is apparently eight; though some commentators would reduce them to seven (the sacred number), either by not counting the last, as not being co-ordinate in form with the rest, or by omitting the third, as a gloss introduced from Ps. xxxvii.

11. It is generally agreed that the first four are of a negative character, and express the state of spiritual desire which leads to the possession

of the Kingdom; the second four are positive, and describe the character and treatment of members of the Kingdom. Tholuck agrees with Wesley that there is an order of progression, but that it is not of such a nature that each stage excludes those which precede it.

2. In St. Luke the Beatitudes and the Woes are all personally expressed: 'Blessed are ye poor men,' &c. In the crowd on the hillside

many rich were there, but rather the poor of the world, took occasion from thence to make a transition from temporal to spiritual things. 'Blessed,' saith He (or *happy*—so the word should be rendered, both in this and the following verses), 'are the poor in spirit.' He does not say, they that are poor as to outward circumstances, it being not impossible that some of these may be as far from happiness as a monarch upon his throne, but 'the poor in spirit'—they who, whatever their outward circumstances are, have that disposition of heart which is the first step to all real, substantial happiness, either in this world, or that which is to come.

3. Some have judged, that by the poor in spirit here, are meant those who love poverty; those who are free from covetousness, from the love of money; who fear, rather than desire, riches. Perhaps they have been induced so to judge, by wholly confining their thoughts to the very term, or by considering that weighty observation of St. Paul, that 'the love of money is the root of all evil.' And hence many have wholly divested themselves, not only of riches, but of all worldly goods. Hence also the vows of voluntary poverty seem to have arisen in the Romish Church, it being supposed that so eminent a degree of this fundamental grace must be a large step toward the 'kingdom of heaven.'

But these do not seem to have observed, first, that the expression of St. Paul must be understood with some restriction; otherwise it is not true; for the love of money is not

the majority were doubtless poor, hard-working folk; but there might well be amongst them some of the Pharisees, who stood apart with a certain scorn. But St. Matthew saw that the blessedness of which our Lord spoke was not the result of economic poverty, but of the sense of spiritual need which brought these people round our Saviour; and his addition of 'in spirit' guards the phrase against the misunderstanding that would find in it a commendation of economic poverty as

in itself blessed. It is true that this spirit far more often goes with poverty than with riches—'God hath chosen the poor in this world rich in faith'; but it is the spiritual temper, not the economic condition, that makes for happiness or wretchedness.

3. What St. Paul does say is that the love of money is a root of *all* evils; not, as Wesley says, *the* root of *very many* evils. It is one root of all sorts of evil, but not the only one.

the root, the sole root, of all evil. There are a thousand other roots of evil in the world, as sad experience daily shows. His meaning can only be, it is the root of very many evils ; perhaps of more than any single vice besides. Secondly, that this sense of the expression, ' poor in spirit,' will by no means suit our Lord's present design, which is to lay a general foundation whereon the whole fabric of Christianity may be built , a design which would be in no wise answered by guarding against one particular vice : so that, if even this were supposed to be one part of His meaning, it could not possibly be the whole. Thirdly, that it cannot be supposed to be any part of His meaning, unless we charge Him with manifest tautology ; seeing, if poverty of spirit were only freedom from covetousness, from the love of money, or the desire of riches, it would coincide with what He afterwards mentions, it would be only a branch of purity of heart.

4. Who then are ' the poor in spirit ' ? Without question, the humble , they who know themselves , who are convinced of sin ; those to whom God hath given that first repentance, which is previous to faith in Christ.

One of these can no longer say, ' I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing ' , as now knowing, that he is ' wretched, and poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked.' He is convinced that he is spiritually poor indeed , having no spiritual good abiding in him. ' In me,' saith he, ' dwelleth no good thing,' but whatsoever is evil and abominable. He has a deep sense of the loathsome leprosy of sin, which he brought with him from his mother's womb, which overspreads his whole soul, and totally corrupts every power and faculty thereof. He sees more and more of the evil tempers which spring from that evil root : the pride and haughtiness of spirit, the constant bias to think of himself more highly than he ought to think , the vanity, the thirst after the esteem or honour that cometh from men , the hatred or envy, the jealousy or revenge, the anger, malice, or bitterness ; the inbred enmity both against God and man, which appears in ten thousand shapes , the love of the world, the self-will, the foolish and hurtful desires, which cleave to his inmost soul. He



is conscious how deeply he has offended by his tongue ; if not by profane, immodest, untrue, or unkind words, yet by discourse which was not ' good to the use of edifying,' not ' meet to minister grace to the hearers,' which, consequently, was all corrupt in God's account, and grievous to His Holy Spirit. His evil works are now likewise ever in his sight : if he tells them, they are more than he is able to express. He may as well think to number the drops of rain, the sands of the sea, or the days of eternity.

5. His guilt is now also before his face : he knows the punishment he has deserved, were it only on account of his carnal mind, the entire, universal corruption of his nature how much more, on account of all his evil desires and thoughts, of all his sinful words and actions ! He cannot doubt for a moment, but the least of these deserves the damnation of hell—' the worm that dieth not, and the fire that never shall be quenched.' Above all, the guilt of ' not believing on the name of the only-begotten Son of God ' lies heavy upon him. How, saith he, shall I escape, who ' neglect so great salvation ' ! ' He that believeth not is condemned already,' and ' the wrath of God abideth on him.'

6. But what shall he give in exchange for his soul, which is forfeited to the just vengeance of God ? ' Wherewithal shall he come before the Lord ? ' How shall he pay Him that he oweth ? Were he from this moment to perform the most perfect obedience to every command of God, this would make no amends for a single sin, for any one act of past disobedience ; seeing he owes God all the service he is able to perform, from this moment to all eternity could he pay this, it would make no manner of amends for what he ought to have done before. He sees himself therefore utterly helpless with regard to atoning for his past sins , utterly unable to make any amends to God, to pay any ransom for his own soul.

But if God would forgive him all that is past, on this one condition, that he should sin no more ; that for the time to

4. ' Tells ' is used in its old sense of ' counts ' ; as in Milton's *L'Allegro*,  
67 :

Every shepherd tells his tale  
Under the hawthorn in the dale.

That is, reckons up his flock.

come he should entirely and constantly obey all His commands , he well knows that this would profit him nothing, being a condition he could never perform. He knows and feels that he is not able to obey even the outward commands of God , seeing these cannot be obeyed while his heart remains in its natural sinfulness and corruption , inasmuch as an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit. But he cannot cleanse a sinful heart : with men this is impossible : so that he is utterly at a loss even how to begin walking in the path of God's commandments. He knows not how to get one step forward in the way. Encompassed with sin, and sorrow, and fear, and finding no way to escape, he can only cry out, ' Lord, save, or I perish ! '

7. Poverty of spirit then, as it implies the first step we take in running the race which is set before us, is a just sense of our inward and outward sins, and of our guilt and helplessness. This some have monstrously styled ' the virtue of humility ' , thus teaching us to be proud of knowing we deserve damnation ! But our Lord's expression is quite of another kind , conveying no idea to the hearer, but that of mere want, of naked sin, of helpless guilt and misery.

8. The great apostle, where he endeavours to bring sinners to God, speaks in a manner just answerable to this. ' The wrath of God,' saith he, ' is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men ' (Rom. i. 18, &c.) ; a charge which he immediately fixes on the heathen world, and thereby proves they are under the wrath of God. He next shows that the Jews were no better than they, and were therefore under the same condemnation , and all this, not in order to their attaining ' the noble virtue of humility,' but

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7. It is no more ' monstrous ' to call humility a virtue than to call pride a vice. But Wesley was terribly afraid of suggesting that humility was in any degree a meritorious cause of salvation ; hence he will not allow that it is a virtue at all. He modified in later life this extreme view of the worthlessness of all works and tempers before jus-

tification ; in the *Minutes*, 1770, he says : ' As to *merit* itself, of which we have been so dreadfully afraid ; we are rewarded *according to our works*, yea, *because of our works*. How does this differ from *for the sake of our works* ? And how differs this from *secundum merita operum*—as our works *deserve* ? Can you split this hair ? I doubt I cannot.'

‘that every mouth might be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God.’

He proceeds to show, that they were helpless as well as guilty, which is the plain purport of all those expressions: ‘Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified’; ‘But now the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, without the law, is manifested’; ‘We conclude, that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law,’—expressions all tending to the same point, even to ‘hide pride from man’; to humble him to the dust, without teaching him to reflect upon his humility as a virtue; to inspire him with that full, piercing conviction of his utter sinfulness, guilt, and helplessness, which casts the sinner, stripped of all, lost and undone, on his strong Helper, Jesus Christ the righteous.

9. One cannot but observe here, that Christianity begins just where heathen morality ends; poverty of spirit, conviction of sin, the renouncing ourselves, the not having our own righteousness (the very first point in the religion of Jesus Christ), leaving all pagan religion behind. This was ever hid from the wise men of this world, insomuch that the whole Roman language, even with all the improvements of the Augustan age, does not afford so much as a name for *humility* (the word from whence we borrow this, as is well known, bearing in Latin a quite different meaning); no, nor was one found in all the copious language of Greece, till it was made by the great apostle.

10. O that we may feel what they were not able to express! Sinner, awake! Know thyself! Know and feel, that thou

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9. This observation is just. *Humilitas* in classical Latin means always *meanness, baseness, abjectness*; it is not till we come to Lactantius, a Christian writer of the third century A.D., that we find it in the sense of humility. Similarly in Greek *ταπεινός* and its compounds always express mean-spiritedness, contemptibleness; and the noun

*ταπεινοφροσύνη* is first found in St. Paul’s address at Miletus (Acts xx. 19); and was certainly a Christian coinage, possibly enough, as Wesley suggests, his own. Aristotle (*Ethica Nicom.* iv. 8) makes high-mindedness the virtuous mean between vanity and little-mindedness, which are both vices.

wert 'shapen in wickedness,' and that 'in sin did thy mother conceive thee'; and that thou thyself hast been heaping sin upon sin, ever since thou couldest discern good from evil! Sink under the mighty hand of God, as guilty of death eternal, and cast off, renounce, abhor, all imagination of ever being able to help thyself! Be it all thy hope to be washed in His blood, and renewed by His almighty Spirit, who Himself 'bare all our sins in His own body on the tree'! So shalt thou witness, 'Happy are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'

II. This is that kingdom of heaven, or of God, which is within us; even 'righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' And what is 'righteousness,' but the life of God in the soul; the mind which was in Christ Jesus, the image of God stamped upon the heart, now renewed after the likeness of Him that created it? What is it but the love of God, because He first loved us, and the love of all mankind for His sake?

And what is this 'peace,' the peace of God, but that calm serenity of soul, that sweet repose in the blood of Jesus, which leaves no doubt of our acceptance in Him; which excludes all fear, but the loving, filial fear of offending our Father which is in heaven?

This inward kingdom implies also 'joy in the Holy Ghost', who seals upon our hearts 'the redemption which is in Jesus,' the righteousness of Christ imputed to us 'for the remission of the sins that are past', who giveth us now 'the earnest of our inheritance,' of the crown which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give at that day. And well may this be termed 'the kingdom of heaven', seeing it is heaven already opened in the soul: the first springing up of those rivers of pleasure which flow at God's right hand for evermore.

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II. Compare Sermon VII, where this paragraph is elaborated.

In Sermon XLIX, 20, Wesley asks liberty to use the phrase 'imputed righteousness,' though he admits he does not like it. But he says in his

*Remarks on Hill's Farrago Double-Distilled* (1773), 'That phrase—the imputed righteousness of Christ—I never did use.' He had forgotten this passage.

12. 'Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' Whosoever thou art, to whom God hath given to be 'poor in spirit,' to feel thyself lost, thou hast a right thereto, through the gracious promise of Him who cannot lie. It is purchased for thee by the blood of the Lamb. It is very nigh thou art on the brink of heaven! Another step, and thou enterest into the kingdom of righteousness, and peace, and joy! Art thou all sin?—'Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world!' All unholy?—see thy 'Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous!' Art thou unable to atone for the least of thy sins?—'He is the propitiation for' all thy 'sins.' Now believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and all thy sins are blotted out! Art thou totally unclean in soul and body?—here is the 'fountain for sin and uncleanness!' 'Arise, and wash away thy sins!' Stagger no more at the promise through unbelief! Give glory to God! Dare to believe! Now cry out, from the ground of thy heart,—

Yes, I yield, I yield at last,  
Listen to Thy speaking blood;  
Me, with all my sins, I cast  
On my atoning God.

13. Then thou learnest of Him to be 'lowly of heart.' And this is the true, genuine, Christian humility, which flows from a sense of the love of God, reconciled to us in Christ Jesus. Poverty of spirit, in this meaning of the word, begins where a sense of guilt and of the wrath of God ends; and is a continual sense of our total dependence on Him, for every good thought, or word, or work; of our utter inability to all good, unless He 'water us every moment', and an abhorrence of the praise of men, knowing that all praise is due unto God only. With this is joined a loving shame, a tender humiliation before God, even for the sins which we know He hath forgiven us, and for the sin which still remaineth in our hearts,

12. The quotation is from a hymn by Charles Wesley, first published in *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, 1742, beginning, 'I will hearken what the

Lord.' It is in the Methodist Hymn-Book, No. 341.

13. Compare Sermon XLVI, on Sin in Believers.

although we know it is not imputed to our condemnation. Nevertheless, the conviction we feel of inbred sin is deeper and deeper every day. The more we grow in grace, the more do we see of the desperate wickedness of our heart. The more we advance in the knowledge and love of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ (as great a mystery as this may appear to those who know not the power of God unto salvation), the more do we discern of our alienation from God, of the enmity that is in our carnal mind, and the necessity of our being entirely renewed in righteousness and true holiness.

II. 1. It is true, he has scarce any conception of this who now begins to know the inward kingdom of heaven. 'In his prosperity he saith, I shall never be moved ; Thou, Lord, hast made my hill so strong.' Sin is so utterly bruised beneath his feet, that he can scarce believe it remaineth in him. Even temptation is silenced, and speaks not again it cannot approach, but stands afar off. He is borne aloft in the chariots of joy and love : he soars 'as upon the wings of an eagle.' But our Lord well knew that this triumphant state does not often continue long : He therefore presently subjoins, 'Blessed are they that mourn ; for they shall be comforted.'

2. Not that we can imagine this promise belongs to those who mourn only on some worldly account , who are in sorrow and heaviness merely on account of some worldly trouble or disappointment, such as the loss of their reputation or friends, or the impairing of their fortune. As little title to it have they who are afflicting themselves, through fear of some temporal evil , or who pine away with anxious care, or that desire of earthly things which 'maketh the heart sick.' Let us not think these 'shall receive anything from the Lord' : He is not in all their thoughts. Therefore it is that they thus 'walk in a vain shadow, and disquiet themselves in vain.' 'And this shall ye have of Mine hand,' saith the Lord, 'ye shall lie down in sorrow.'

3. The mourners of whom our Lord here speaks, are those

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II. 3. That this was Wesley's own and he seems to have regarded it as experience we have already seen ; normal, or at all events, usual. No

that mourn on quite another account : they that mourn after God ; after Him in whom they did ' rejoice with joy unspeakable,' when He gave them to ' taste the good,' the pardoning ' word, and the powers of the world to come.' But He now ' hides His face and they are troubled ' ; they cannot see Him through the dark cloud. But they see temptation and sin, which they fondly supposed were gone never to return, arising again, following after them amain, and holding them in on every side. It is not strange if their soul is now disquieted within them, and trouble and heaviness take hold upon them. Nor will their great enemy fail to improve the occasion : to ask, ' Where is now thy God ? Where is now the blessedness whereof thou spakest ? the beginning of the kingdom of heaven ? Yea, hath God said, " Thy sins are forgiven thee ? " Surely God hath not said it. It was only a dream, a mere delusion, a creature of thy own imagination. If thy sins are forgiven, why art thou thus ? Can a pardoned sinner be thus unholy ? ' And if then, instead of immediately crying to God, they reason with him that is wiser than they, they will be in heaviness indeed, in sorrow of heart, in anguish not to be expressed. Nay, even when God shines again upon the soul, and takes away all doubt of His past mercy, still he that is weak in faith may be tempted and troubled on account of what is to come ; especially when inward sin revives, and

doubt it is very common in the type of conversion which he knew best ; after the intense excitement of the deliverance from sin, an emotional reaction is almost inevitable. Sermons XL and XLI deal with this subject. In the former of these it is recognized that one cause of this reaction is ignorance ; and that is very true. The more entirely emotional conversion has been, the more likely it is that a period of depression will follow it ; the larger the part that reason has played, the more stable will the convert's experience be. It seems to be suggested here that God may deliber-

ately ' hide His face ' from the believer for his trial ; but in Sermon XL this is flatly denied : ' He never deserts us, as some speak ; it is we only that desert Him.' Tholuck follows Wesley in regarding this mourning as the penitence of the believer for his sins after conversion ; but it is surely not right to limit it to this form of sorrow :

In every sorrow of the heart  
Eternal mercy bears a part.

Votaw would include in it ' all those experiences of life which bring sadness and sorrow to men.'

The first quotation is from Dr. John Donne's Hymn to God the

thrusts sore at him that he may fall. Then may he again cry out,—

I have a sin of fear, that when I've spun  
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore !—

lest I should make shipwreck of the faith, and my last state be worse than the first,—

Lest all my bread of life should fail,  
And I sink down unchanged to hell !

4. Sure it is, that this 'affliction,' for the present, 'is not joyous, but grievous ; nevertheless, afterward it bringeth forth peaceable fruit unto them that are exercised thereby.' Blessed, therefore, are they that thus mourn, if they 'tarry the Lord's leisure,' and suffer not themselves to be turned out of the way, by the miserable comforters of the world ; if they resolutely reject all the comforts of sin, of folly, and vanity ; all the idle diversions and amusements of the world, all the pleasures which 'perish in the using,' and which only tend to benumb and stupefy the soul, that it may neither be sensible of itself nor God. Blessed are they who 'follow on to know the Lord,' and steadily refuse all other comfort. They shall be comforted by the consolations of His Spirit, by a fresh manifestation of His love ; by such a witness of His accepting them in the Beloved, as shall never more be taken away from them. This 'full assurance of faith' swallows up all doubt, as well as all tormenting fear ; God now giving them a sure hope of an enduring substance, and 'strong consolation through grace.' Without disputing whether it be possible for any of those to 'fall away, who were once enlightened, and made partakers of the Holy Ghost,' it suffices them to say, by the power now resting upon them, 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? . I am persuaded, that neither death,

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Father ; it is quoted in the paper written at the end of the Sixth Savannah Journal (Standard Edition, i. 418) as expressing Wesley's own experience at that time. The second is the last two lines of verse

3, Part II of C. Wesley's hymn 'Groaning for Redemption,' in *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, 1742 (Osborn, ii. p. 159). Verses 6 and 7 of Part IV are Hymn 477 in the Methodist Hymn-Book.



nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Rom. viii. 35-39).

5. This whole process, both of mourning for an absent God, and recovering the joy of His countenance, seems to be shadowed out in what our Lord spoke to His Apostles, the night before His passion: 'Do ye inquire of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see Me and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament'; namely, when ye do not see Me; 'but the world shall rejoice', shall triumph over you, as though your hope were now come to an end. 'And ye shall be sorrowful,' through doubt, through fear, through temptation, through vehement desire; 'but your sorrow shall be turned into joy,' by the return of Him whom your soul loveth, 'A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now have sorrow': ye mourn, and cannot be comforted: 'but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice,' with calm inward joy, 'and your joy no man taketh from you' (John xvi. 19-22).

6. But although this mourning is at an end, is lost in holy joy, by the return of the Comforter, yet is there another, and a blessed mourning it is, which abides in the children of God. They still mourn for the sins and miseries of mankind: they 'weep with them that weep.' They weep for them that weep not for themselves, for the sinners against their own souls. They mourn for the weakness and unfaithfulness of those that are, in some measure, saved from their sins. 'Who is weak, and they are not weak? Who is offended, and they burn not?' They are grieved for the dishonour continually done to the Majesty of heaven and earth. At all times they have an awful sense of this, which brings a deep seriousness upon their spirits, a seriousness which is not a little increased, since the eyes of their understanding were opened, by their

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5. 'Shadowed': used in its old sense of pictured.

continually seeing the vast ocean of eternity, without a bottom or a shore, which has already swallowed up millions of millions of men, and is gaping to devour them that yet remain. They see here the house of God eternal in the heavens ; there, hell and destruction without a covering , and thence feel the importance of every moment, which just appears, and is gone for ever !

7. But all this wisdom of God is foolishness with the world. The whole affair of mourning and poverty of spirit is with them stupidity and dullness. Nay, it is well if they pass so favourable a judgement upon it ; if they do not vote it to be mere moping and melancholy, if not downright lunacy and distraction. And it is no wonder at all, that this judgement should be passed by those who know not God. Suppose, as two persons were walking together, one should suddenly stop, and with the strongest signs of fear and amazement, cry out, ' On what a precipice do we stand ! See, we are on the point of being dashed in pieces ! Another step, and we shall fall into that huge abyss ! Stop ! I will not go on for all the world ! '—when the other, who seemed, to himself at least, equally sharp-sighted, looked forward and saw nothing of all this , what would he think of his companion, but that he was beside himself ; that his head was out of order ; that much religion (if he was not guilty of ' much learning ' ) had certainly made him mad !

8. But let not the children of God, ' the mourners in Sion,' be moved by any of these things. Ye, whose eyes are enlightened, be not troubled by those who walk on still in darkness. Ye do not walk on in a vain shadow : God and eternity are real things. Heaven and hell are in very deed open before you , and ye are on the edge of the great gulf. It has already swallowed up more than words can express, nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues , and still yawns to devour, whether they see it or no, the giddy, miserable children of men. O cry aloud ! Spare not ! Lift up your voice to Him who grasps both time and eternity, both for yourselves and your brethren, that ye may be counted worthy to escape the destruction that cometh as a whirlwind ! that ye may be

brought safe through all the waves and storms, into the haven where you would be! Weep for yourselves, till He wipes away the tears from your eyes. And even then, weep for the miseries that come upon the earth, till the Lord of all shall put a period to misery and sin, shall wipe away the tears from all faces, and 'the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea.'

SERMON XVII  
UPON OUR LORD'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT

DISCOURSE II

ON October 19, 1739, Wesley was at Cardiff, and says : ' At six almost the whole town (I was informed) came together, to whom I explained the six last Beatitudes ; but my heart was so enlarged I knew not how to give over, so that we continued three hours.' Matt. v. 6 was his text at Spitalfields on December 30, 1760.

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*Blessed are the meek : for they shall inherit the earth.*

*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness : for they shall be filled.*

*Blessed are the merciful : for they shall obtain mercy.*

—MATT. v. 5-7.

I. 1. WHEN ' the winter is past,' when ' the time of singing is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land ' ; when He that comforts the mourners is now returned, ' that He may abide with them for ever ' ; when, at the brightness of His presence, the clouds disperse, the dark clouds of doubt and uncertainty, the storms of fear flee away, the waves of sorrow subside, and their spirit again rejoiceth in God their Saviour ; then is it that this word is eminently fulfilled ; then those whom He hath comforted can bear witness, ' Blessed,' or happy, ' are the meek ; for they shall inherit the earth.'

2. But who are ' the meek ' ? Not those who grieve at nothing, because they know nothing ; who are not discomposed at the evils that occur, because they discern not evil from good. Not those who are sheltered from the shocks of life by a stupid insensibility, who have, either by nature or art, the virtue of stocks and stones, and resent nothing,

because they feel nothing. Brute philosophers are wholly unconcerned in this matter. Apathy is as far from meekness as from humanity. So that one would not easily conceive how any Christians of the purer ages, especially any of the Fathers of the Church, could confound these, and mistake one of the foulest errors of Heathenism for a branch of true Christianity.

3. Nor does Christian meekness imply, the being without zeal for God, any more than it does ignorance or insensibility. No; it keeps clear of every extreme, whether in excess or defect. It does not destroy but balance the affections, which the God of nature never designed should be rooted out by grace, but only brought and kept under due regulations. It poises the mind aright. It holds an even scale, with regard to anger, and sorrow, and fear, preserving the mean in every circumstance of life, and not declining either to the right hand or the left.

4. Meekness, therefore, seems properly to relate to ourselves: but it may be referred either to God or our neighbour.

I. Par. 2. 'Brute philosophers'; i.e. the Stoics, so called from their affectation of insensibility. In the *Oxford Dictionary* a quotation is given from J. Pope (ante 1744):

The brute philosopher, who ne'er has proved  
The joy of loving or of being loved.

'Apathy': insensibility to pleasure and pain. Lewes, in *Hist. Philoso.* i. 260, says: 'Apathy was considered by the Stoics as the highest condition of humanity.' Pope, in *Essay on Man*, ii. 91 (1732), has—

In lazy Apathy let Stoics boast  
Their virtue fixed.

To brand Stoicism as 'one of the foulest errors of heathenism' is a bit of controversial abuse, and unworthy of a scholar like Wesley. Tertullian, *De Anima*, 20, speaks of the Stoic Seneca as 'Seneca saepe

noster' ('Seneca, who is often one of ourselves'); and Jerome, *Adv. Jovin.* i. 49, calls him without qualification 'noster Seneca.' The system which produced such men as Cato, Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius ought not to be treated disrespectfully, although its denial of a personal God, its lack of a sense of sin, its haughty exclusiveness and want of sympathy, and its lack of faith in immortality, made it practically ineffective for the help of the world. The student should read the dissertation on St. Paul and Seneca in Lightfoot's *Philippians*.

3. This statement, and the corresponding one below in section 5, that none of the passions are designed to be rooted out, will need to be remembered when we come to the sermon on Christian Perfection.

4. So Votaw says: 'The Old Testament conception of meekness seems

When this due composure of mind has reference to God, it is usually termed 'resignation', a calm acquiescence in whatsoever is His will concerning us, even though it may not be pleasing to nature; saying continually, 'It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good.' When we consider it more strictly with regard to ourselves, we style it 'patience' or 'contentedness.' When it is exerted toward other men, then it is 'mildness' to the good, and 'gentleness' to the evil.

5. They who are truly meek can clearly discern what is evil; and they can also suffer it. They are sensible of everything of this kind, but still, meekness holds the reins. They are exceeding 'zealous for the Lord of hosts', but their zeal is always guided by knowledge, and tempered, in every thought, and word, and work, with the love of man, as well as the love of God. They do not desire to extinguish any of the passions which God has for wise ends implanted in their nature; but they have the mastery of all: they hold them all in subjection, and employ them only in subservience to those ends. And thus even the harsher and more displeasing passions are applicable to the noblest purposes, even hatred, anger, and fear, when engaged against sin, and regulated by faith and love, are as walls and bulwarks to the soul, so that the wicked one cannot approach to hurt it.

6. It is evident, this divine temper is not only to abide but to increase in us day by day. Occasions of exercising, and thereby increasing it, will never be wanting while we remain upon earth. 'We have need of patience, that after we have done' and suffered 'the will of God, we may receive the promise.' We have need of resignation, that we may in all circumstances say, 'Not as I will, but as Thou wilt.' And we have need of 'gentleness toward all men'; but especially toward the evil and unthankful: otherwise we shall be overcome of evil, instead of overcoming evil with good.

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to concern a man's attitude towards God rather than towards other men.

A necessary outworking of this meekness towards God is a quality of

gentleness, forgiveness, and self-abnegation in a man's relations to his fellow men.'

7. Nor does meekness restrain only the outward act, as the Scribes and Pharisees taught of old, and the miserable teachers who are not taught of God will not fail to do in all ages. Our Lord guards against this, and shows the true extent of it, in the following words : ‘ Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill ; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgement ’ (Matt. v. 21, &c.) ‘ But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgement : and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire.’

8. Our Lord here ranks under the head of murder, even that anger which goes no farther than the heart ; which does not show itself by any outward unkindness, no, not so much as a passionate word. ‘ Whosoever is angry with his brother,’ with any man living, seeing we are all brethren ; whosoever feels any unkindness in his heart, any temper contrary to love , whosoever is angry without a cause, without a sufficient cause, or farther than that cause requires, ‘ shall be in danger of the judgement ’ , *ἐνοχος ἔσται* ; *shall*, in that moment, *be obnoxious to the righteous judgement of God.*

But would not one be inclined to prefer the reading of those copies which omit the word *εἰκῇ*, *without a cause* ? Is it not entirely superfluous ? For if *anger at persons* be a temper contrary to love, how can there be a cause, a sufficient cause for it,—any that will justify it in the sight of God ?

Anger at sin we allow. In this sense we may be angry, and yet we sin not. In this sense our Lord Himself is once recorded to have been angry ‘ He looked round about upon them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.’

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7. The use of the teaching of verses 21–6 to illustrate this Beatitude is admirable for practical purposes, though it may be regarded as exegetically unsound. Its real object is to show the spiritual interpretation which is to be put upon the old law in the Kingdom of God.

The better rendering is ‘ to the men of old time.’

8. The critics almost all agree with Wesley in omitting the words ‘ without a cause,’ for which there is comparatively little documentary evidence.

He was grieved at the sinners, and angry at the sin. And this is undoubtedly right before God.

9. 'And whosoever shall say to his brother, *Raca*'—whosoever shall give way to anger, so as to utter any contemptuous word. It is observed by commentators, that *Raca* is a Syriac word, which properly signifies, *empty, vain, foolish*; so that it is as inoffensive an expression as can well be used, toward one at whom we are displeased. And yet, whosoever shall use this, as our Lord assures us, 'shall be in danger of the council'; rather, shall be obnoxious thereto: he shall be liable to a severer sentence from the Judge of all the earth.

'But whosoever shall say, *Thou fool*'—whosoever shall so give place to the devil, as to break out into reviling, into designedly reproachful and contumelious language—'shall be obnoxious to hell-fire'; shall, in that instant, be liable to the highest condemnation. It should be observed, that our Lord describes all these as obnoxious to capital punishment. The first to strangling, usually inflicted on those who were condemned in one of the inferior courts; the second, to stoning, which was frequently inflicted on those who were condemned by the great Council at Jerusalem; the third, to burning alive,

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9. As the text stands, Wesley's interpretation is the only possible one; the punishment in each case is death, but there is a difference of degree both in the courts and the form of the penalty. The chief difficulty is to see why it should be worse to call a man a fool in Greek than in Syriac! for *Raca* was a common term of abuse, and not a mere meaningless exclamation. I strongly incline to Bacon's re-arrangement of the passage, thus:

Ye have heard that it was said to the ancients, Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever killeth shall be amenable to judgement;

But I say unto you, Whosoever is angry with his brother shall be amenable to judgement.

(Moreover it was said) Whosoever shall call his brother Scoundrel shall be amenable to the court;

(But I say unto you) Whosoever calleth him Fool shall be amenable to the hell of fire.

This gives a better parallelism, and avoids the difficulty of creating an unreal distinction between *Raca* and Fool.

Gehenna, the valley of Hinnom, to the south-west of Jerusalem, was used as a dump for the refuse of the city, which was kept perpetually burning; hence in the Rabbinical literature it was frequently used as the name for the place of punishment of the godless. It was one of the seven things created before the world, and its fire was sixty times hotter than ordinary fire. Our Lord uses the popular phrase in the sense in which His hearers would understand it—the punishment of the sinner in the world to come. Burning alive was not practised by the Jews at all; such barbarity was left



inflicted only on the highest offenders, in the 'valley sons of Hinnom'; *Taì 'Evvóμ*, from which that word is evidently taken which we translate 'hell.'

10. And whereas men naturally imagine, that God excuse their defect in some duties, for their exactness in others, our Lord next takes care to cut off that vain, though common imagination. He shows, that it is impossible for any sin to *commute* with God; who will not accept one duty for another, nor take a part of obedience for the whole. He warns us, that the performing our duty to God will not excuse us from our duty to our neighbour, that works of piety, as they are, will be so far from commending us to God, if we are wanting in charity, that, on the contrary, that want of charity will make all those works an abomination to the Lord.

'Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, on account of thy unkind behaviour toward him, of thyself, him, 'Raca,' or, 'Thou fool'—think not that thy gift will atone for thy anger, or that it will find any acceptance with God, so long as thy conscience is defiled with the guilt of an unrepented sin. 'Leave there thy gift before the altar, and first be reconciled to thy brother' (at least that in thee lies toward being reconciled), 'and then come and offer thy gift' (Matt. v. 23, 24).

11. And let there be no delay in what so nearly concerns thy soul. 'Agree with thine adversary quickly'—now, while thou art in the way with him—if possible, before he go out of thy sight; 'lest at any time thy adversary deliver thee to the judge'—lest he appeal to God, the Judge of all, 'and the judge deliver thee to the office

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to the heathen, and to the Roman Catholic Church of later days. In the two cases in which it is apparently set down as a punishment (Lev. xx. 14 and xxi. 9), 'burned with fire' probably means 'branded,' not 'burned alive.'

11. The connexion of this passage with what has gone before is not

very obvious. Apparently the adversary, or prosecutor, is the person who has been abused, and is going to bring an action against the abuser; and the follower of Christ is to seek to be reconciled with him, so that judgement may not be brought against him, not only in the court, but in the court of He-

Satan, the executioner of the wrath of God ; ' and thou be cast into prison '—into hell, there to be reserved to the judgement of the great day. ' Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.' But this it is impossible for thee ever to do seeing thou hast nothing to pay. Therefore, if thou art once in that prison, the smoke of thy torment must ' ascend up for ever and ever.'

12. Meantime 'the meek shall inherit the earth.' Such is the foolishness of worldly wisdom ! The wise of the world had warned them again and again, that if they did not resent such treatment, if they would tamely suffer themselves to be thus abused, there would be no living for them upon earth, that they would never be able to procure the common necessities of life, nor to keep even what they had, that they could expect no peace, no quiet possession, no enjoyment of anything. Most true, suppose there were no God in the world, or suppose He did not concern Himself with the children of men : but 'when God ariseth to judgement, and to help all the meek upon earth,' how doth He laugh all this heathen wisdom to scorn, and turn the 'fierceness of man to His praise' ! He takes a peculiar care to provide them with all things needful for life and godliness, He secures to them the provision He hath made, in spite of the force, fraud, or malice of men ; and what He secures He gives them richly to enjoy. It is sweet to them, be it little or much. As in patience they possess their souls, so they truly possess whatever God hath given them. They are always content, always pleased with what they have : it pleases them, because it pleases God : so that while their heart, their desire, their joy is in heaven, they may truly be said to 'inherit the earth.'

13. But there seems to be a yet farther meaning in these words, even that they shall have a more eminent part in 'the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness', in that inheritance, a general description of which (and the particulars we shall

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13. Wesley did not trouble himself much about the Millennium. He expresses his belief in a letter

to Dr. Middleton (1749) in the words of the passage from Revelation here quoted. But in a letter to Mr.

know hereafter) St. John hath given in the twentieth chapter of the Revelation: 'And I saw an angel come down from heaven, . . . and he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, and bound him a thousand years. . . . And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and of them which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands, and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.'

II. 1. Our Lord has hitherto been more immediately employed in removing the hindrances of true religion: such is pride, the first grand hindrance of all religion, which is taken away by poverty of spirit; levity and thoughtlessness, which prevent any religion from taking root in the soul, till they are removed by holy mourning such are anger, impatience, discontent, which are all healed by Christian meekness. And when once these hindrances are removed, these evil diseases of the soul, which were continually raising false cravings therein, and filling it with sickly appetites, the native appetite of a heaven-born spirit returns, it hungers and thirsts after righteousness and 'blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled.'

2. Righteousness, as was observed before, is the image of God, the mind which was in Christ Jesus. It is every holy and heavenly temper in one; springing from, as well as termi-

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Christopher Hopper (1788), CCCVI in *Works*, vol. xii, he says, 'I said nothing in Bradford Church but what follows: That Bengelius had given it as his opinion that the millennial reign of Christ would begin in the year 1836. I have no

opinion at all upon the head; I can determine nothing at all about it. These calculations are far above, out of my sight. I have only one thing to do—to save my own soul and those that hear me.'

nating in, the love of God, as our Father and Redeemer, and the love of all men for His sake.

3. 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after' this in order fully to understand which expression, we should observe, first, that hunger and thirst are the strongest of all our bodily appetites. In like manner this hunger in the soul, this thirst after the image of God, is the strongest of all our spiritual appetites, when it is once awakened in the heart, yea, it swallows up all the rest in that one great desire,—to be renewed after the likeness of Him that created us. We should, secondly, observe, that from the time we begin to hunger and thirst, those appetites do not cease, but are more and more craving and importunate, till we either eat and drink, or die. And even so, from the time that we begin to hunger and thirst after the whole mind which was in Christ, these spiritual appetites do not cease, but cry after their food with more and more importunity, nor can they possibly cease, before they are satisfied, while there is any spiritual life remaining. We may, thirdly, observe, that hunger and thirst are satisfied with nothing but meat and drink. If you would give to him that is hungry all the world beside, all the elegance of apparel, all the trappings of state, all the treasure upon earth, yea, thousands of gold and silver; if you would pay him ever so much honour,—he regards it not: all these things are then of no account with him. He would still say, 'These are not the things I want: give me food, or else I die.' The very same is the case with every soul that truly hungers and thirsts after righteousness. He can find no comfort in anything but this: he can be satisfied with nothing else. Whatever you offer besides, it is lightly esteemed whether it be riches, or honour, or pleasure, he still says, 'This is not the thing which I want! Give me love, or else I die!'

4. And it is as impossible to satisfy such a soul, a soul that is athirst for God, the living God, with what the world accounts religion, as with what they account happiness. The religion of the world implies three things (1) The doing no

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II. 4. In Sermon II, on The account of what is here called 'the Almost Christian, we have the full religion of the world.'

harm, the abstaining from outward sin ; at least from such as is scandalous, as robbery, theft, common swearing, drunkenness : (2) The doing good, the relieving the poor , the being charitable, as it is called (3) The using the means of grace : at least the going to church and to the Lord's supper. He in whom these three marks are found is termed by the world ' a religious man.' But will this satisfy him who hungers after God ? No : it is not food for his soul. He wants a religion of a nobler kind, a religion higher and deeper than this. He can no more feed on this poor, shallow, formal thing, than he can ' fill his belly with the east wind.' True, he is careful to abstain from the very appearance of evil ; he is zealous of good works , he attends all the ordinances of God but all this is not what he longs for. This is only the outside of that religion which he insatiably hungers after. The knowledge of God in Christ Jesus , the life which is hid with Christ in God ', the being ' joined unto the Lord in one spirit ', the having ' fellowship with the Father and the Son ', the ' walking in the light as God is in the light ', the being ' purified even as He is pure,'—this is the religion, the righteousness he thirsts after , nor can he rest, till he thus rests in God.

5. ' Blessed are they who ' thus ' hunger and thirst after righteousness , for they shall be filled.' They shall be filled with the things which they long for , even with righteousness and true holiness. God shall satisfy them with the blessings of His goodness, with the felicity of His chosen. He shall feed them with the bread of heaven, with the manna of His love. He shall give them to drink of His pleasures as out of the river, which he that drinketh of shall never thirst, only for more and more of the water of life. This thirst shall endure for ever.

The painful thirst, the fond desire,  
Thy joyous presence shall remove :  
But my full soul shall still require  
A whole eternity of love.

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5. The quotation is from Charles Wesley's hymn entitled ' Pleading the Promise of Sanctification' (Ezek. xxxvi. 23, &c.), in *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, 1742. The original contains twenty-eight verses. Fifteen of them are in the 1876 Hymn-Book, divided into three

6. Whosoever then thou art, to whom God hath given to 'hunger and thirst after righteousness,' cry unto Him that thou mayest never lose that inestimable gift—that this divine appetite may never cease. If many rebuke thee, and bid thee hold thy peace, regard them not, yea, cry so much the more, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on me!' 'Let me not live, but to be holy as Thou art holy!' No more 'spend thy money for that which is not bread, nor thy labour for that which satisfieth not.' Canst thou hope to dig happiness out of the earth—to find it in the things of the world? O trample under foot all its pleasures, despise its honours, count its riches as dung and dross—yea, and all the things which are beneath the sun—for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus,' for the entire renewal of thy soul in that image of God wherein it was originally created. Beware of quenching that blessed hunger and thirst, by what the world calls 'religion', a religion of form, of outside show, which leaves the heart as earthly and sensual as ever. Let nothing satisfy thee but the power of godliness, but a religion that is spirit and life, thy dwelling in God, and God in thee—the being an inhabitant of eternity, the entering in by the blood of sprinkling 'within the veil,' and sitting 'in heavenly places with Christ Jesus.'

III. 1. And the more they are filled with the life of God, the more tenderly will they be concerned for those who are still without God in the world, still dead in trespasses and sins. Nor shall this concern for others lose its reward. 'Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.'

The word used by our Lord more immediately implies the

hymns (391-3). It is reduced to two hymns (548-9) in the present Hymn-Book. It is printed in full at the end of the sermon on Christian Perfection, No. XXXV; and at the end of Fletcher's *Last Check to Antinomianism*. This verse (the 22nd) is in the original,

While my full soul doth still require  
Thy whole eternity of love.

In the copy after the sermon it is 'The whole eternity of love.' In the 1876 Hymn-Book it is as here; the verse is omitted in the present Hymn-Book.

III. 1. The extension of the meaning of 'merciful' to cover the whole ground of love is more than justified by the delightful 'inset' of the comments on 1 Cor. xiii. to which it

compassionate, the tender-hearted ; those who, far from despising, earnestly grieve for, those that do not hunger after God.

This eminent part of brotherly love is here, by a common figure, put for the whole ; so that 'the merciful,' in the full sense of the term, are they who love their neighbours as themselves.

2. Because of the vast importance of this love—without which, 'though we spake with the tongues of men and angels, though we had the gift of prophecy, and understood all mysteries, and all knowledge ; though we had all faith, so as to remove mountains ; yea, though we gave all our goods to feed the poor, and our very bodies to be burned, it would profit us nothing'—the wisdom of God has given us, by the Apostle Paul, a full and particular account of it ; by considering which we shall most clearly discern who are the merciful that shall obtain mercy.

3. 'Charity,' or love (as it were to be wished it had been rendered throughout, being a far plainer and less ambiguous word), the love of our neighbour as Christ hath loved us, 'suffereth long' ; is patient towards all men it suffers all the weakness, ignorance, errors, infirmities, all the frowardness and littleness of faith, of the children of God ; all the malice and wickedness of the children of the world. And it suffers all this, not only for a time, for a short season, but to the end ; still feeding our enemy when he hungers ; if he thirst, still giving him drink ; thus continually 'heaping coals of fire,' of melting love, 'upon his head.'

4. And in every step toward this desirable end, the 'overcoming evil with good,' 'love is kind' (*χρηστεύεται*, a word not easily translated) : it is *soft, mild, benign*. It stands at the utmost distance from moroseness, from all harshness or

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gives occasion. The sermon on Charity (No. XCI) should be read as an introduction to these paragraphs.

3. On the rendering 'love' rather than 'charity,' see Sermon XIII, ii. 9 and note.

'Coals of fire.' Origen and the majority of commentators rather interpret this as meaning the burning pangs of shame and remorse which the offender feels when good is returned for evil.

sourness of spirit ; and inspires the sufferer at once with the most amiable sweetness, and the most fervent and tender affection.

5. Consequently, 'love envieth not': it is impossible it should ; it is directly opposite to that baneful temper. It cannot be, that he who has this tender affection to all, who earnestly wishes all temporal and spiritual blessings, all good things in this world and the world to come, to every soul that God hath made, should be pained at His bestowing any good gift on any child of man. If he has himself received the same, he does not grieve, but rejoice, that another partakes of the common benefit. If he has not, he blesses God that his brother at least has, and is herein happier than himself. And the greater his love, the more does he rejoice in the blessings of all mankind, the farther is he removed from every kind and degree of envy toward any creature.

6. Love *οὐ περπερεύεται*,—not 'vaunteth not itself', which coincides with the very next words ; but rather (as the word likewise properly imports), *is not rash or hasty* in judging, it will not hastily condemn any one. It does not pass a severe sentence, on a slight or sudden view of things : it first weighs all the evidence, particularly that which is brought in favour of the accused. A true lover of his neighbour is not like the generality of men, who, even in cases of the nicest nature, 'see a little, presume a great deal, and so jump to the conclusion.' No he proceeds with wariness and circumspection, taking heed to every step, willingly subscribing to that rule of the ancient Heathen (O where will the modern Christian appear!) 'I am so far from lightly believing what one man says against another, that I will not easily believe what a man says against himself. I will always allow him second thoughts, and many times counsel too.'

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6. There is no justification for Wesley's rendering ; the word belongs to late Greek, and the meaning is 'does not play the braggart.' It is the outward manifestation of the

self-conceit which is spoken of in the next clause.

This 'ancient heathen' was Seneca. See Sermon XXV. 13.



7. It follows, love 'is not puffed up': it does not incline or suffer any man 'to think more highly of himself than he ought to think', but rather to think soberly: yea, it humbles the soul unto the dust. It destroys all high conceits engendering pride; and makes us rejoice to be as nothing, to be little and vile, the lowest of all, the servant of all. They who are 'kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love,' cannot but 'in honour prefer one another.' Those who, having the same love, are of one accord, do in lowliness of mind 'each esteem other better than themselves.'

8. 'It doth not behave itself unseemly'; it is not rude, or willingly offensive to any. It 'renders to all their due; fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour', courtesy, civility, humanity to all the world; in their several degrees 'honouring all men.' A late writer defines good breeding, nay, the highest degree of it, politeness, 'A continual desire to please, appearing in all the behaviour.' But if so, there is none so well-bred as a Christian, a lover of all mankind. For he cannot but desire to 'please all men for their good to edification': and this desire cannot be hid, it will necessarily appear in all his intercourse with men. For his 'love is without dissimulation': it will appear in all his actions and conversation: yea, and will constrain him, though without guile, 'to become all things to all men, if by any means he may save some.'

9. And in becoming all things to all men, 'love seeketh not her own.' In striving to please all men, the lover of mankind has no eye at all to his own temporal advantage. He covets no man's silver, or gold, or apparel he desires nothing but the salvation of their souls: yea, in some sense, he may be said, *not to seek his own* spiritual, any more than temporal, advantage; for while he is on the full stretch to save their souls from death, he, as it were, forgets himself. He

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8. 'A late writer.' This definition of politeness is quoted again in Sermon C, ii. 4, as Addison's, and in a slightly different form: 'A constant desire of pleasing all men,

appearing through the whole conversation.' Probably it is somewhere in the *Spectator*, though I have not yet dropped on it.

does not think of himself, so long as that zeal for the glory of God swallows him up. Nay, at some times he may almost seem, through an excess of love, to give up himself, both his soul and his body, while he cries out, with Moses, 'O, this people have sinned a great sin, yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—, and if not, blot me out of the book which Thou hast written' (Exod. xxxii. 31, 32), or, with St. Paul, 'I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh' (Rom. ix. 3).

10. No marvel that such 'love is not provoked'; οὐ παροξύνεται. Let it be observed, the word *easily*, strangely inserted in the translation, is not in the original: St. Paul's words are absolute. 'Love is not provoked'; it is not provoked to unkindness toward any one. Occasions indeed will frequently occur; outward provocations of various kinds; but love does not yield to provocation, it triumphs over all. In all trials it looketh unto Jesus, and is more than conqueror in His love.

It is not improbable that our translators inserted that word, as it were, to *excuse* the Apostle; who, as they supposed, might otherwise appear to be wanting in the very love which he so beautifully describes. They seem to have supposed this from a phrase in the Acts of the Apostles, which is likewise very inaccurately translated. When Paul and Barnabas disagreed concerning John, the translation runs thus, 'And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder' (Acts xv. 39). This naturally induces the reader to suppose, that they were equally sharp therein; that St. Paul, who was undoubtedly right, with regard to the point in question (it being quite improper to take John with them again, who had deserted them before), was as much provoked as Barnabas, who gave such a proof of his anger, as to leave

10. The A.V. is the only version in which the word 'easily' is inserted. Adam Clarke says sarcastically, 'The translation made and printed by the command of King James I, fol. 1611 improperly

inserts the word *easily*, which might have been His Majesty's own.'

On the difference between Paul and Barnabas, see note on Sermon XV, ii. 5.

the work for which he had been set apart by the Holy Ghost. But the original imports no such thing ; nor does it affirm that St. Paul was provoked at all. It simply says, 'Εγένετο οὖν παροξυσμός,—‘And there was a sharpness,’ a *paroxysm* of anger , in consequence of which Barnabas left St. Paul, took John, and went his own way. Paul then ‘chose Silas and departed, being recommended by the brethren to the grace of God’ (which is not said concerning Barnabas) , ‘and he went through Syria and Cilicia,’ as he had proposed, ‘confirming the churches.’ But to return.

11. Love prevents a thousand provocations which would otherwise arise, because it ‘thinketh no evil.’ Indeed, the merciful man cannot avoid knowing many things that are evil ; he cannot but see them with his own eyes, and hear them with his own ears. For love does not put out his eyes, so that it is impossible for him not to see that such things are done , neither does it take away his understanding, any more than his senses, so that he cannot but know that they are evil. For instance ; when he sees a man strike his neighbour, or hears him blaspheme God, he cannot either question the thing done, or the words spoken, or doubt of their being evil : yet, οὐ λογίζεται τὸ κακόν. The word λογίζεται, ‘thinketh,’ does not refer either to our seeing and hearing, or to the first and involuntary acts of our understanding ; but to our *willingly thinking* what we need not , our *inferring* evil, where it does not appear ; to our *reasoning* concerning things which we do not see , our *supposing* what we have neither seen nor heard. This is what true love absolutely destroys. It tears up, root and branch, all *imagining* what we have not known. It casts out all jealousies, all evil surmisings, all readiness to believe evil. It is frank, open, unsuspicious ; and, as it cannot design, so neither does it fear, evil.

12. It ‘rejoiceth not in iniquity’ ; common as this is, even among those who bear the name of Christ, who scruple not to rejoice over their enemy, when he falleth either into

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11. The word means ‘does not keep account of’ ; does not set it down to be remembered afterwards ; does not register evil done to a man.

affliction, or error, or sin. Indeed, how hardly can they avoid this, who are zealously attached to any party! How difficult is it for them not to be pleased with any fault which they discover in those of the opposite party,—with any real or supposed blemish, either in their principles or practice! What warm defender of any cause is clear of these? Yea, who is so calm as to be altogether free? Who does not rejoice when his adversary makes a false step, which he thinks will advantage his own cause? Only a man of love. He alone weeps over either the sin or folly of his enemy, takes no pleasure in hearing or in repeating it, but rather desires that it may be forgotten for ever.

13. But he 'rejoiceth in the truth,' wheresoever it is found, in 'the truth which is after godliness', bringing forth its proper fruit,—holiness of heart, and holiness of conversation. He rejoices to find that even those who oppose him, whether with regard to opinions, or some points of practice, are nevertheless lovers of God, and in other respects unreprouable. He is glad to hear good of them, and to speak all he can consistently with truth and justice. Indeed, good in general is his glory and joy, wherever diffused throughout the race of mankind. As a citizen of the world he claims a share in the happiness of all the inhabitants of it. Because he is a man, he is not unconcerned in the welfare of any man, but enjoys whatsoever brings glory to God, and promotes peace and good-will among men.

14. This 'love covereth all things' (so, without all doubt, πάντα στέγει should be translated, for otherwise it would be the very same with πάντα ὑπομένει, 'endureth all things') because the merciful man rejoiceth not in iniquity, neither does he willingly make mention of it. Whatever evil he sees, hears, or knows, he nevertheless conceals, so far as he can

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13. Rather 'rejoiceth with the truth.' 'Truth is personified, and love and truth rejoice together' (Robertson and Plummer).

14. The word may mean 'covereth up'; but in the four passages in the

N.T. in which it occurs, it rather means 'is proof against.' But there is room for difference of opinion, and Wesley's application of his interpretation is excellent.

without making himself 'partaker of other men's sins.' Wheresoever or with whomsoever he is, if he sees anything which he approves not, it goes not out of his lips, unless to the person concerned, if haply he may gain his brother. So far is he from making the faults or failings of others the matter of his conversation, that of the absent he never does speak at all, unless he can speak well. A talebearer, a backbiter, a whisperer, an evil-speaker, is to him all one as a murderer. He would just as soon cut his neighbour's throat, as thus murder his reputation. Just as soon would he think of diverting himself by setting fire to his neighbour's house, as of thus 'scattering abroad arrows, fire-brands, and death,' and saying, 'Am I not in sport?'

He makes one only exception. Sometimes he is convinced that it is for the glory of God, or (which comes to the same) the good of his neighbour, that an evil should not be covered. In this case, for the benefit of the innocent, he is constrained to declare the guilty. But even here, (1) He will not speak at all, till love, superior love, constrains him. (2) He cannot do it from a general confused view of doing good, or promoting the glory of God, but from a clear sight of some particular end, some determinate good, which he pursues. (3) Still he cannot speak, unless he be fully convinced that this very means is necessary to that end; that the end cannot be answered, at least not so effectually, by any other way. (4) He then doeth it with the utmost sorrow and reluctance, using it as the last and worst medicine, a desperate remedy in a desperate case, a kind of poison never to be used but to expel poison. Consequently, (5) He uses it as sparingly as possible. And this he does with fear and trembling, lest he should transgress the law of love by speaking too much, more than he would have done by not speaking at all.

15. Love 'believeth all things.' It is always willing to think the best, to put the most favourable construction on

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15. 'When love has no evidence, it believes the best. When the evidence is adverse, it hopes for the

best. And when hopes are repeatedly disappointed, it still courageously waits' (Robertson and Plummer).

everything. It is ever ready to believe whatever may tend to the advantage of any one's character. It is easily convinced of (what it earnestly desires) the innocence and integrity of any man, or, at least, of the sincerity of his repentance, if he had once erred from the way. It is glad to excuse whatever is amiss; to condemn the offender as little as possible; and to make all the allowance for human weakness which can be done without betraying the truth of God.

16. And when it can no longer believe, then love 'hopeth all things.' Is any evil related of any man? Love hopes that the relation is not true, that the thing related was never done. Is it certain it was?—'But perhaps it was not done with such circumstances as are related, so that, allowing the fact, there is room to hope it was not so ill as it is represented.' Was the action apparently undeniably evil? Love hopes the intention was not so. Is it clear, the design was evil too?—'Yet might it not spring from the settled temper of the heart, but from a start of passion, or from some vehement temptation, which hurried the man beyond himself.' And even when it cannot be doubted, but all the actions, designs, and tempers are equally evil; still love hopes that God will at last make bare His arm, and get Himself the victory, and that there shall be 'joy in heaven over' this 'one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance.'

17. Lastly. It 'endureth all things.' This completes the character of him that is truly merciful. He endureth not some, not many. things only; not most, but absolutely *all things*. Whatever the injustice, the malice, the cruelty of men can inflict, he is able to suffer. He calls nothing intolerable, he never says of anything, 'This is not to be borne.' No; he can not only do, but suffer, all things through Christ which strengtheneth him. And all he suffers does not destroy his love, nor impair it in the least. It is proof against all. It is a flame that burns even in the midst of the great deep. 'Many waters cannot quench' his 'love, neither can the floods drown it.' It triumphs over all. It 'never faileth,' either in time or in eternity.

In obedience to what heaven decrees,  
 Knowledge shall fail, and prophecy shall cease ;  
 But lasting charity's more ample sway,  
 Nor bound by time, nor subject to decay,  
 In happy triumph shall for ever live,  
 And endless good diffuse, and endless praise receive.

So shall 'the merciful obtain mercy'; not only by the blessing of God upon all their ways, by His now repaying the love they bear to their brethren a thousand-fold into their own bosom, but likewise by 'an exceeding and eternal weight of glory,' in the 'kingdom prepared for them from the beginning of the world.'

18. For a little while you may say, 'Woe is me, that I' am constrained to 'dwell with Mesech, and to have my habitation among the tents of Kedar!' You may pour out your soul, and bemoan the loss of true, genuine love in the earth: lost indeed! You may well say (but not in the ancient sense), 'See how *these Christians* love one another!' these Christian kingdoms, that are tearing out each other's bowels, desolating one another with fire and sword! these Christian armies, that are sending each other by thousands, by ten thousands, quick into hell! these Christian nations, that are all on fire with intestine broils, party against party, faction against faction! these Christian cities, where deceit and fraud, oppression and wrong, yea robbery and murder, go not out of their streets! these Christian families, torn asunder with envy, jealousy, anger, domestic jars, without number, without end! yea, what

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17. The quotation is from Prior's *Charity*, 31-6. The first line should be:

Thus, in obedience to what Heaven decrees.

18. The war of the Spanish Succession was going on from 1741 to 1748, when it was concluded by the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle. England entered it in 1742; in 1743 the English defeated the French at Dettingen. In 1744 Louis XV invaded Flanders, and Frederick of Prussia attacked Bohemia and

Moravia. In 1745 the British were defeated at Fontenoy, and the Young Pretender made his famous march from Scotland and reached Preston, to the great alarm of England. The war with France continued till 1748.

Wesley adopts the view that Babylon the Great in Rev. xviii means the Church of Rome. This was the common Protestant interpretation, though there can be no doubt that Pagan Rome was actually intended.

is most dreadful, most to be lamented of all, these Christian churches!—churches ('tell it not in Gath,'—but, alas! how can we hide it, either from Jews, Turks, or Pagans?) that bear the name of Christ, the Prince of Peace, and wage continual war with each other! that convert sinners by burning them alive! that are 'drunk with the blood of the saints'! Does this praise belong only to 'Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth'? Nay, verily, but Reformed churches (so called) have fairly learned to tread in her steps. Protestant churches too know how to persecute, when they have power in their hands, even unto blood. And meanwhile, how do they also anathematize each other! devote each other to the nethermost hell! What wrath, what contention, what malice, what bitterness, is everywhere found among them, even where they agree in essentials, and only differ in opinions, or in the circumstantialia of religion! Who follows after *only* the 'things that make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another'? O God! how long? Shall Thy promise fail? Fear it not, ye little flock! Against hope, believe in hope! It is your Father's good pleasure yet to renew the face of the earth. Surely all these things shall come to an end, and the inhabitants of the earth shall learn righteousness. 'Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they know war any more.' 'The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains', and 'all the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of our God.' 'They shall not' then 'hurt or destroy in all His holy mountain', but they shall call their 'walls salvation, and their gates praise.' They shall all be without spot or blemish, loving one another, even as Christ hath loved us.—Be thou part of the first-fruits, if the harvest is not yet. Do thou love thy neighbour as thyself. The Lord God fill thy heart with such a love to every soul, that thou mayest be ready to lay down thy life for his sake! May thy soul continually overflow with love, swallowing up every unkind and unholy temper, till He calleth thee up into the region of love, there to reign with Him for ever and ever!



## SERMON XVIII

### UPON OUR LORD'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT

#### DISCOURSE III

ON Sunday, August 26, 1739, Wesley preached on the Bowling Green in Bristol at a quarter to seven in the morning to a congregation of 4,000 from 'Blessed are the peace-makers,' &c.; and at Rose Green at five in the evening of the same day from Matt. v. 9-12, when he estimates the hearers at 5,000. He had heard Whitefield preach in the open air on April 1, 1739, at eight in the morning at the Bowling Green, and at 4.15 in the evening at Rose Green. The next day he followed Whitefield's example and held his first open-air service at the Brickfields, taking for his text 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,' &c. The Bowling Green was near the centre of the city, and he regularly preached there throughout this year. Rose Green was a flat piece of ground on the top of a high hill about two miles out of Bristol amongst the collieries. Mr. H. J. Foster and Mr. H. Arnaud Scott have identified it as the plot marked 227 on the Ordnance Map sheet lxxii. 10. It was the place where Whitefield began field-preaching on February 17 of this year. There were heaps of refuse from the coal-pits scattered over the ground, one of which made an excellent pulpit. It is sometimes referred to simply as 'The Mount,' and it is not unlikely that Wesley recognized an encouraging coincidence in the name, and took special satisfaction in choosing his text from our Lord's Sermon on the Mount on this occasion. See Foster's 'Bristol Notes' in *W.H.S.* iii. 2.

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*Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God.*

*Blessed are the peace-makers : for they shall be called the children of God.*

*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake.*

*Rejoice, and be exceeding glad : for great is your reward in heaven : for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.—MATT. v. 8-12.*

I. 1. How excellent things are spoken of the love of our neighbour ! It is the 'fulfilling of the law,' 'the end of the

commandment.' Without this, all we have, all we do, all we suffer, is of no value in the sight of God. But it is that love of our neighbour which springs from the love of God : otherwise itself is nothing worth. It behoves us, therefore, to examine well upon what foundation our love of our neighbour stands ; whether it is really built upon the love of God ; whether we do ' love Him because He first loved us ' ; whether we are pure in heart for this is the foundation which shall never be moved. ' Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.'

2. ' The pure in heart ' are they whose hearts God hath ' purified even as He is pure ', who are purified, through faith in the blood of Jesus, from every unholy affection ; who, being ' cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfect holiness in the ' loving ' fear of God.' They are, through the power of His grace, purified from pride, by the deepest poverty of spirit ; from anger, from every unkind or turbulent passion, by meekness and gentleness, from every desire but to please and enjoy God, to know and love Him more and more, by that hunger and thirst after righteousness which

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I. par. 2. An admirable definition of purity of heart ; it has been unfortunate, however, that in common parlance, and in a good deal of our religious literature, purity has been narrowed down to mean almost exclusively sexual purity. When it is said that a man is an impure man, or even that he is immoral, it is taken to mean that he is guilty of sexual indulgence. This tendency can be traced back to the old Gnostic view of the essential sinfulness of sexual intercourse ; and it has been greatly strengthened by the exaggerated notion of the superior moral character of virginity in both sexes fostered by the mediaeval and modern Romish Church, with its false ideal of the monastic life and the celibacy of the clergy. The mischief is not that too much stress has been laid on the value of sexual purity—that is impossible ; but that other

kinds of impurity have been lightly regarded, if not altogether condoned. Selfishness, greed, uncharitableness, gluttony, idleness, extravagance, bad temper, are just as contrary to purity of heart as incontinence ; and should be visited with just as much reprobation by the Church. That Wesley, especially in his earlier period, was not uninfected by the mediaeval conception of the superior sanctity of a single life is plain enough from his *Thoughts on a Single Life*, published in 1743 ; though he lays the stress of his argument, not on any inherent sinfulness in the marriage relation, but on the freedom from distraction and worldly cares enjoyed by the single man or woman. And one can see the influence of this point of view in his selection of verses 27–32 as being the best illustration of verse 8.

now engrosses their whole soul : so that now they love the Lord their God with all their heart, and with all their soul, and mind, and strength.

3. But how little has this purity of heart been regarded by the false teachers of all ages ! They have taught men barely to abstain from such outward impurities as God hath forbidden by name ; but they did not strike at the heart , and by not guarding against, they in effect countenanced, inward corruptions.

A remarkable instance of this, our Lord has given us in the following words : ‘ Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery ’ (verse 27) ; and, in explaining this, those blind leaders of the blind only insisted on men’s abstaining from the outward act. ‘ But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart ’ (verse 28) ; for God requireth truth in the inward parts : He searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins , and if thou incline unto iniquity with thy heart, the Lord will not hear thee.

4. And God admits no excuse for retaining anything which is an occasion of impurity. Therefore, ‘ if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee : for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell ’ (verse 29). If persons as dear to thee as thy right eye be an occasion of thy thus offending God, a means of exciting unholy desire in thy soul, delay not, forcibly separate from them. ‘ And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee : for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell ’ (verse 30). If any who seem as necessary to thee as thy right hand be an occasion of sin, of impure desire , even though it were never

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4. The specific mention of the eye and the hand in this connexion is due to the fact that it is through sight and touch that sexual temptation gains its greatest strength. It is very significant that these verses

are repeated in Matt. xviii. 8 and Mark ix. 47 in relation to sins against children. It is the awful sin of corrupting the innocence of ‘ these little ones ’ that our Lord is there denouncing ; rather than

to go beyond the heart, never to break out in word or action ; constrain thyself to an entire and final parting : cut them off at a stroke : give them up to God. Any loss, whether of pleasure, or substance, or friends, is preferable to the loss of thy soul.

Two steps only it may not be improper to take before such an absolute and final separation. First, try whether the unclean spirit may not be driven out by fasting and prayer, and by carefully abstaining from every action, and word, and look, which thou hast found to be an occasion of evil. Secondly, if thou art not by this means delivered, ask counsel of him that watcheth over thy soul, or, at least, of some who have experience in the ways of God, touching the time and manner of that separation ; but confer not with flesh and blood, lest thou be 'given up to a strong delusion to believe a lie.'

5. Nor may marriage itself, holy and honourable as it is, be used as a pretence for giving a loose to our desires. Indeed, 'it hath been said, Whosoever will put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement' : and then all was well ; though he alleged no cause, but that he did not like her, or liked another better. 'But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication' (that is, adultery ; the word *πορνεία* signifying unchastity in general, either in the married or unmarried state), 'causeth her to commit adultery,' if she marry again 'and whosoever shall marry her that is put away committeth adultery' (verses 31, 32).

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do that, let a man pluck out the eye that gazes with foul longing on their fresh charm, cut off the hand that immodestly tampers with their unsuspecting confidence.

'Confer not with flesh and blood.' Wesley more than once misapplies this phrase. It means, as St. Paul uses it (Gal. i. 16), to consult with other men, instead of following implicitly the guidance of the Spirit of God.

5. To 'give a loose' is a common phrase in the eighteenth-century

writers, meaning to free from all restraint.

Verses 29, 30, on divorce, have probably been introduced here as an additional example of the necessity for bridling the sensual desires. The words appear to have been actually spoken on another occasion, as related in xix. 3 and Mark x. 1 ; St. Luke (xvi. 18) has a similar command in another connexion. In the versions of Mark and Luke, re-marriage of a divorced person is forbidden under any circumstances ;

All polygamy is clearly forbidden in these words, wherein our Lord expressly declares, that for any woman who has a husband alive, to marry again is adultery. By parity of reason, it is adultery for any man to marry again, so long as he has a wife alive, yea, although they were divorced ; unless that divorce had been for the cause of adultery : in that only case there is no scripture which forbids [the innocent person] to marry again.

6. Such is the purity of heart which God requires, and works in those who believe on the Son of His love. And 'blessed are' they who are thus 'pure in heart' for they shall see God.' He will 'manifest Himself unto them,' not only 'as He doth not unto the world,' but as He doth not always to His own children. He will bless them with the clearest communications of His Spirit, the most intimate 'fellowship with the

in the versions in Matthew, re-marriage is permitted where the divorce has been made on the ground of adultery. The former represents the ideal view of marriage, as it will be ultimately realized in the Kingdom of God ; the latter is a concession granted, like that in the Mosaic law, for the hardness of men's hearts. In the fully realized kingdom adultery is unthinkable, and therefore divorce will never take place ; but under present conditions, where adultery does occur, divorce and subsequent re-marriage are permissible. But the modern tendency to make divorce and re-marriage easy, on such grounds as desertion, incompatibility of temper, cruelty, and the like, is clearly contrary to the spirit of our Lord's teaching ; and individual cases of hardship ought not to be allowed to outweigh the public advantage of maintaining the sacredness of the marriage bond. Malachi (ii. 15) declares that the divine purpose in monogamy was the bringing-up of children in godliness ; and the most cogent argument

against facility of divorce is that in a state of society where divorce is easy, family life is destroyed, and children are robbed of their right to the care and oversight of their parents. Judicial separation need not be refused where it has become clear that no further family life is possible ; but even so there is no reason to allow re-marriage. It is not without significance that in both Matthew and Mark, our Lord's teaching on divorce is immediately followed by the incident of the blessing of the little children. The resolution of the Toronto Methodist Oecumenical Conference of 1911 (*Proceedings*, p. 661) sets forth the Methodist position. Marriage is declared to be a divine institution, sacred and inviolable. An emphatic protest is entered against 'the crime of easy and unjustifiable divorce' ; and commendation is given to the fidelity of Methodist ministers 'in refusing to become partners in the divorce evil by performing marriage ceremonies for improperly divorced people.'

Father and with the Son.' He will cause His presence to go continually before them, and the light of His countenance to shine upon them. It is the ceaseless prayer of their heart, 'I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory'; and they have the petition they ask of Him. They now see Him by faith (the veil of flesh being made, as it were, transparent), even in these His lowest works, in all that surrounds them, in all that God has created and made. They see Him in the height above, and in the depth beneath, they see Him filling all in all. The pure in heart see all things full of God. They see Him in the firmament of heaven, in the moon, walking in brightness; in the sun, when he rejoiceth as a giant to run his course. They see Him 'making the clouds His chariots, and walking upon the wings of the wind.' They see Him 'preparing rain for the earth, and blessing the increase of it; giving grass for the cattle, and green herb for the use of man.' They see the Creator of all, wisely governing all, and 'upholding all things by the word of His power.' 'O Lord our Governor, how excellent is Thy name in all the world!'

7. In all His providences relating to themselves, to their souls or bodies, the pure in heart do more particularly see God. They see His hand ever over them for good, giving them all things in weight and measure, numbering the hairs of their head, making a hedge round about them and all that they have, and disposing all the circumstances of their life according to the depth both of His wisdom and mercy.

8. But in a more especial manner they see God in His ordinances. Whether they appear in the great congregation, to 'pay Him the honour due unto His name,' 'and worship Him in the beauty of holiness'; or 'enter into their closets,' and there pour out their souls before their 'Father which is in secret'; whether they search the oracles of God, or hear the ambassadors of Christ proclaiming glad tidings of salvation; or, by eating of that bread, and drinking of that cup, 'show forth His death till He come' in the clouds of heaven,—in all these His appointed ways, they find such a near approach as cannot be expressed. They see Him, as it were, face to face,

and 'talk with Him, as a man talketh with his friend'—a fit preparation for those mansions above, wherein they shall see Him as He is.

9. But how far were they from seeing God, who, having heard 'that it had been said by them of old times, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths' (verse 33), interpreted it thus, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, when thou swearest by the Lord Jehovah: thou 'shalt perform unto the Lord' these 'thine oaths'; but as to other oaths, He regardeth them not.

So the Pharisees taught. They not only allowed all manner of swearing in common conversation; but accounted even forswearing a little thing, so they had not sworn by the peculiar name of God.

But our Lord here absolutely forbids all common swearing as well as all false swearing, and shows the heinousness of both, by the same awful consideration, that every creature is God's, and He is everywhere present, in all, and over all. 'I say unto you, Swear not at all, neither by heaven, for it is God's throne' (verse 34), and, therefore, this is the same as to swear by Him who sitteth upon the circle of the heavens: 'Nor by the earth, for it is His footstool' (verse 35); and He is as intimately present in earth as heaven: 'Neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King'; and God is well known in her palaces. 'Neither shalt thou swear by thy head; because thou canst not make one hair white or black' (verse 36); because even this, it is plain, is not thine, but God's, the sole disposer of all in heaven and earth.

9. It is rather a *tour de force* to bring in our Lord's teaching on oaths under this Beatitude; it is really a part of the broad question of the relation of the law of the Kingdom to the old law of Moses. But that may pass. As in the previous case, the ideal is set up, which can only be fully realized when the Kingdom is universally established. An oath is essentially wrong, as implying a double standard of truthfulness;

and ideally no oath, either public or private, is to be taken. The need for it is 'of the evil one,' who is still the Prince of this world. Hence under present conditions the arguments of paragraph 10 on the legitimacy of taking an oath before a magistrate are sound; and both our Lord and St. Paul complied with the usage of their time. But wherever the law permits it, the Christian man should prefer to make an affirma-

'But let your communication' (verse 37), your conversation, your discourse with each other, 'be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay!', a bare, serious affirming or denying; 'for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil': ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ ἐστίν, *is of the evil one*; proceedeth from the devil, and is a mark of his children.

10. That our Lord does not here forbid the 'swearing in judgement and truth,' when we are required so to do by a magistrate, may appear (1), From the occasion of this part of His discourse—the abuse He was here reproving—which was false swearing, and common swearing; the swearing before a magistrate being quite out of the question. (2) From the very words wherein He forms the general conclusion: 'Let your communication,' or discourse, 'be, Yea, yea, Nay, nay.' (3) From His own example for He answered Himself upon oath, when required by a magistrate. When the high-priest said unto him, 'I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God,' Jesus immediately answered in the affirmative, 'Thou hast said' (that is, the truth), 'nevertheless' (or, rather, *moreover*), 'I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven' (Matt. xxvi. 63, 64). (4) From the example of God, even the Father, who, 'willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath' (Heb. vi. 17). (5) From the example of St. Paul, who we think had the Spirit of God, and well understood the mind of his Master. 'God is my witness,' saith he, to the Romans, 'that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my

tion, if only as a witness to the world of the eternal validity of his Master's teaching.

'The peculiar name of God'; i.e. Jehovah, or Jahveh, as it is the present fashion to write it; though it is a piece of pedantry to discard the form that has embodied itself in all our English literature for one which is after all not certainly right.

Our Lord is only dealing with

oaths as a confirmation of truth; common swearing, i.e. the use of foul and blasphemous language in conversation, is quite another matter and is not in our Lord's mind here.

'One hair, white or black.' It would save much popular misunderstanding if the order of the words were changed: 'thou canst not make a single hair, whether white or black.'



prayers' (Rom. i. 9) : to the Corinthians, 'I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth' (2 Cor. i. 23) : and to the Philippians, 'God is my record, how greatly I long after you in the bowels of Jesus Christ' (Phil. i. 8). Hence it undeniably appears, that if the Apostle knew the meaning of his Lord's words, they do not forbid swearing on weighty occasions even to one another : how much less before a magistrate ! And, lastly, from that assertion of the great Apostle, concerning solemn swearing in general (which it is impossible he could have mentioned without any touch of blame, if his Lord had totally forbidden it) : 'Men verily swear by the greater', by one greater than themselves, 'and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife' (Heb. vi. 16).

II. But the great lesson which our blessed Lord inculcates here, and which He illustrates by this example, is, that God is in all things, and that we are to see the Creator in the glass of every creature ; that we should use and look upon nothing as separate from God, which indeed is a kind of practical Atheism ; but, with a true magnificence of thought, survey heaven and earth, and all that is therein, as contained by God in the hollow of His hand, who by His intimate presence holds them all in being, who pervades and actuates the whole created frame, and is, in a true sense, the soul of the universe.

II. 1. Thus far our Lord has been more directly employed in teaching the religion of the heart. He has shown what Christians are to be. He proceeds to show what they are to do also,—how inward holiness is to exert itself in our outward conversation. 'Blessed,' saith He, 'are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God.'

2. 'The peace-makers' : the word in the original is *οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί*. It is well known that *εἰρήνη*, in the sacred

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II. No ; this is not the great lesson here, though it is incidentally taught. The great lesson is the temporary and imperfect condition of morality which requires

an oath to confirm the truth of a man's statement.

'Glass' means mirror.

II. 1. This widening of the sense of 'peace-makers' to cover 'those

writings, implies all manner of good; every blessing that relates either to the soul or the body, to time or eternity. Accordingly, when St. Paul, in the titles of his epistles, wishes grace and peace to the Romans or the Corinthians, it is as if he had said, 'As a fruit of the free, undeserved love and favour of God, may you enjoy all blessings, spiritual and temporal; all the good things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.'

3. Hence we may easily learn, in how wide a sense the term 'peace-makers' is to be understood. In its literal meaning it implies those lovers of God and man who utterly detest and abhor all strife and debate, all variance and contention, and accordingly labour with all their might, either to prevent this fire of hell from being kindled, or, when it is kindled, from breaking out, or, when it is broke out, from spreading any farther. They endeavour to calm the stormy spirits of men, to quiet their turbulent passions, to soften the minds of contending parties, and, if possible, reconcile them to each other. They use all innocent arts, and employ all their strength, all the talents which God has given them, as well to preserve peace where it is, as to restore it where it is not. It is the joy of their heart to promote, to confirm, to increase, mutual good-will among men, but more especially among the children of God, however distinguished by things of smaller importance, that as they have all 'one Lord, one faith,' as they are all 'called in one hope of their calling,' so they may all 'walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.'

4. But, in the full extent of the word, a peace-maker is one that, as he hath opportunity, 'doeth good unto all men'; one that, being filled with the love of God and of all mankind,

who do good to all men' sacrifices the particular point of the passage to a general application. The men who are meant are those who seek to bring about peace (1) between God and man; (2) between man

and his fellows. The Christian ideal is the life of perfect harmony with the environment; and in some sense perhaps it may be argued that this includes all good things.

cannot confine the expressions of it to his own family, or friends, or acquaintance, or party, or to those of his own opinions,—no, nor those who are partakers of like precious faith ; but steps over all these narrow bounds, that he may do good to every man, that he may, some way or other, manifest his love to neighbours and strangers, friends and enemies. He doeth good to them all, as he hath opportunity, that is, on every possible occasion ; ‘redeeming the time,’ in order thereto ; buying up every opportunity, improving every hour, losing no moment wherein he may profit another. He does good, not of one particular kind, but good in general, in every possible way , employing herein all his talents of every kind, all his powers and faculties of body and soul, all his fortune, his interest, his reputation ; desiring only, that when his Lord cometh He may say, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant.’

5. He doeth good to the uttermost of his power, even to the bodies of all men. He rejoices to ‘deal his bread to the hungry,’ and to ‘cover the naked with a garment.’ Is any a stranger ? He takes him in, and relieves him according to his necessities. Are any sick or in prison ? He visits them, and administers such help as they stand most in need of. And all this he does, not as unto man ; but remembering Him that hath said, ‘Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.’

6. How much more does he rejoice, if he can do any good to the soul of any man ! This power, indeed, belongeth unto God. It is He only that changes the heart, without which every other change is lighter than vanity. Nevertheless, it pleases Him who worketh all in all, to help man chiefly by man ; to convey his own power, and blessing, and love, through one man to another. Therefore, although it be certain that, ‘the help which is done upon earth, God doeth it Himself’ ; yet has no man need, on this account, to stand idle in his vineyard. The peace-maker cannot he is ever labouring therein, and, as an instrument in God’s hand, preparing the ground for his Master’s use, or sowing the seed of the kingdom, or watering what is already sown, if haply God may give the increase. According to the measure of grace which

he has received, he uses all diligence, either to reprove the gross sinner, to reclaim those who run on headlong in the broad way of destruction, or 'to give light to them that sit in darkness,' and are ready to 'perish for lack of knowledge'; or to 'support the weak, to lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees'; or to bring back and heal that which was lame and turned out of the way. Nor is he less zealous to confirm those who are already striving to enter in at the strait gate; to strengthen those that stand, that they may 'run with patience the race which is set before them', to build up in their most holy faith those that know in whom they have believed; to exhort them to stir up the gift of God which is in them, that, daily growing in grace, 'an entrance may be ministered unto them abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.'

7. 'Blessed are they who are thus continually employed in the work of faith and the labour of love; 'for they shall be called,' that is, *shall be* (a common Hebraism), 'the children of God.' God shall continue unto them the Spirit of adoption, yea, shall pour it more abundantly into their hearts. He shall bless them with all the blessings of His children. He shall acknowledge them as sons before angels and men; 'and if sons, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.'

III. 1. One would imagine such a person as has been above described, so full of genuine humility, so unaffectedly serious, so mild and gentle, so free from all selfish design, so devoted to God, and such an active lover of men, should be the darling of mankind. But our Lord was better acquainted with human nature in its present state. He therefore closes the character of this man of God with showing him the treatment he is to expect in the world. 'Blessed,' saith He, 'are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'

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7. The use of 'to be called' in the sense of 'to be' is not a Hebraism specially; it is common in Greek from Homer downwards.

III. 1. 'The darling of mankind.' A reminiscence of the title given to the Emperor Titus by Suetonius—'deliciae humani generis.'

2. In order to understand this thoroughly, let us, first, inquire, Who are they that are persecuted? And this we may easily learn from St. Paul: 'As of old, he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now' (Gal. iv. 29). 'Yea,' saith the Apostle, 'and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution' (2 Tim. iii. 12). The same we are taught by St. John 'Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren' (1 John iii. 13, 14). As if he had said, The brethren, the Christians, cannot be loved, but by them who have passed from death unto life. And most expressly by our Lord 'If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you' (John xv. 18, &c.).

By all these scriptures it manifestly appears who they are that are persecuted, namely, the righteous—he 'that is born of the Spirit', 'all that will live godly in Christ Jesus', they that are 'passed from death unto life'; those who are 'not of the world', all those who are meek and lowly in heart, that mourn for God, that hunger after His likeness, all that love God and their neighbour, and therefore, as they have opportunity, do good unto all men.

3. If it be, secondly, inquired, why they are persecuted, the answer is equally plain and obvious. It is 'for righteousness' sake'; because they are righteous; because they are born after the Spirit; because they will 'live godly in Christ Jesus'; because they 'are not of the world.' Whatever may be pretended, this is the real cause—be their infirmities more or less, still, if it were not for this, they would be borne with, and the world would love its own. They are persecuted because they are *poor in spirit*; that is, say the world, 'poor-spirited, mean, dastardly souls, good for nothing, not fit to live in the world';—because they *mourn* 'They are such

dull, heavy, lumpish creatures, enough to sink any one's spirits that sees them ! They are mere death-heads ; they kill innocent mirth, and spoil company wherever they come ' ;—because they are *meek* : ' Tame, passive fools, just fit to be trampled upon ' ;—because they *hunger and thirst after righteousness* ' A parcel of hot-brained enthusiasts, gaping after they know not what, not content with rational religion, but running mad after raptures and inward feelings ' ;—because they are *merciful*, lovers of all, lovers of the evil and unthankful ' Encouraging all manner of wickedness ; nay, tempting people to do mischief by impunity : and men who, it is to be feared, have their own religion still to seek ; very loose in their principles ' ,—because they are *pure in heart* : ' Uncharitable creatures, that damn all the world, but those that are of their own sort ! Blasphemous wretches, that pretend to make God a liar, to live without sin ! '—Above all, because they are *peace-makers* ; because they take all opportunities of doing good to all men. This is the grand reason why they have been persecuted in all ages, and will be till the restitution of all things : ' If they would but keep their religion to themselves, it would be tolerable : but it is this spreading their errors, this infecting so many others, which is not to be endured. They do so much mischief in the world, that they ought to be tolerated no longer. It is true, the men do some things well enough , they relieve some of the poor : but this, too, is only done to gain the more to their party ; and so, in effect, to do the more mischief ! ' Thus the men of the world sincerely think and speak. And the more the kingdom of God prevails, the more the peace-makers are enabled to propagate lowliness, meekness, and all other divine tempers, the more mischief is done, in their account consequently, the more are they enraged against the authors of this, and the more vehemently will they persecute them.

4. Let us, thirdly, inquire, Who are they that persecute them ? St. Paul answers, ' He that is born after the flesh ' : every one who is not ' born of the Spirit,' or, at least, desirous so to be ; all that do not at least labour to ' live godly in Christ Jesus ' ; all that are not ' passed from death unto life,'

and, consequently, cannot 'love the brethren'; 'the world,' that is, according to our Saviour's account, they who 'know not Him that sent Me'; they who know not God, even the loving, pardoning God, by the teaching of His own Spirit.

The reason is plain: the spirit which is in the world is directly opposite to the Spirit which is of God. It must therefore needs be that those who are of the world will be opposite to those who are of God. There is the utmost contrariety between them, in all their opinions, their desires, designs, and tempers. And hitherto the leopard and the kid cannot lie down in peace together. The proud, because he is proud, cannot but persecute the lowly, the light and airy, those that mourn: and so in every other kind; the unlikeness of disposition (were there no other) being a perpetual ground of enmity. Therefore, were it only on this account, all the servants of the devil will persecute the children of God.

5. Should it be inquired, fourthly, how they will persecute them, it may be answered in general, Just in that manner and measure which the wise Disposer of all sees will be most for His glory,—will tend most to His children's growth in grace, and the enlargement of His own kingdom. There is no one branch of God's government of the world which is more to be admired than this. His ear is never heavy to the threatenings of the persecutor, or the cry of the persecuted. His eye is ever open, and His hand stretched out to direct every the minutest circumstance. When the storm shall begin, how high it shall rise, which way it shall point its course, when and how it shall end, are all determined by His unerring wisdom. The ungodly are only a sword of His; an instrument which He uses as it pleaseth Him, and which itself, when the gracious ends of His providence are answered, is cast into the fire.

At some rare times, as when Christianity was planted first, and while it was taking root in the earth, as also when the pure doctrine of Christ began to be planted again in our

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5. 'When the pure doctrine of Christ began to be planted,' &c.; i.e. the time of the Protestant Reforma-

tion. The 'King wise and good beyond his years' is of course Edward VI. 'Those who even then

nation ; God permitted the storm to rise high, and His children were called to resist unto blood. There was a peculiar reason why He suffered this with regard to the Apostles, that their evidence might be the more unexceptionable. But from the annals of the Church we learn another, and a far different reason, why He suffered the heavy persecutions which arose in the second and third centuries ; namely, because ' the mystery of iniquity ' did so strongly ' work ' ; because of the monstrous corruptions which even then reigned in the Church : these God chastised, and at the same time strove to heal, by those severe but necessary visitations.

Perhaps the same observation may be made, with regard to the grand persecution in our own land. God had dealt very graciously with our nation : He had poured out various blessings upon us : He had given us peace abroad and at home ; and a king, wise and good beyond his years and, above all, He had caused the pure light of His gospel to arise and shine amongst us. But what return did He find ? ' He looked for righteousness ; but behold a cry '—a cry of oppression and wrong, of ambition and injustice, of malice, and fraud, and covetousness. Yea, the cry of those who even then expired in the flames entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. It was then God arose to maintain His own cause against those that held the truth in unrighteousness. Then He sold them into the hands of their persecutors, by a judgement mixed with mercy ; an affliction to punish, and yet a medicine to heal, the grievous backslidings of His people.

6. But it is seldom God suffers the storm to rise so high as torture or death, or bonds, or imprisonment. Whereas His children are frequently called to endure the lighter kinds of persecution ; they frequently suffer the estrangement of kins-folks, the loss of the friends that were as their own soul.

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expired in the flames' are the victims of Protestant persecution in Edward VI's reign, like Joan Bocher and Van Parre. Beckett says of the latter part of Edward's reign, ' The Government was corrupt. The currency was ruined. Wealth was

squandered in the enriching of those whose lives brought disgrace on their Protestant profession. The unsettling of religious beliefs had its effect upon the social life. Some persons it drove to fanaticism, some to profligacy.'



They find the truth of their Lord's word (concerning the *event*, though not the *design*, of His coming), 'Suppose ye that I am come to give peace upon earth? I tell you, Nay, but rather division' (Luke xii. 51). And hence will naturally follow loss of business or employment, and consequently of substance. But all these circumstances likewise are under the wise direction of God, who allots to every one what is most expedient for him.

7. But the persecution which attends *all* the children of God is that our Lord describes in the following words 'Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you'—shall persecute by reviling you—'and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake.' This cannot fail; it is the very badge of our discipleship, it is one of the seals of our calling; it is a sure portion entailed on all the children of God: if we have it not, we are bastards, and not sons straight through evil report, as well as good report, lies the only way to the kingdom. The meek, serious, humble, zealous lovers of God and man are of good report among their brethren, but of evil report with the world, who count and treat them 'as the filth and offscouring of all things.'

8. Indeed, some have supposed that before the fullness of the Gentiles shall come in, the scandal of the cross will cease; that God will cause Christians to be esteemed and loved even by those who are as yet in their sins. Yea, and sure it is, that even now He at some times suspends the contempt as well as the fierceness of men, 'He makes a man's enemies to be at peace with him' for a season, and gives him favour with his bitterest persecutors. But setting aside this exempt case, the scandal of the cross is not yet ceased; but a man may say still, 'If I please men, I am not the servant of Christ.' Let no man therefore regard that pleasing suggestion (pleasing doubtless to flesh and blood), 'that bad men only *pretend* to hate and despise them that are good, but do indeed love and esteem them in their hearts.' Not so they may employ

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7. 'Falsely' is omitted by many of the Western authorities; it was possibly added later to avoid an

undue generalization, but most of the editors accept it.

them sometimes ; but it is for their own profit. They may put confidence in them , for they know their ways are not like other men's. But still they love them not ; unless so far as the Spirit of God may be striving with them. Our Saviour's words are express ' If ye were of the world, the world would love its own , but because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you.' Yea (setting aside what exceptions may be made by the preventing grace, or the peculiar providence, of God), it hateth them as cordially and sincerely as ever it did their Master.

9. It remains only to inquire, How are the children of God to behave with regard to persecution ? And, first, they ought not knowingly or designedly to bring it upon themselves. This is contrary both to the example and advice of our Lord and all His Apostles ; who teach us not only not to seek, but to avoid it, as far as we can, without injuring our conscience ; without giving up any part of that righteousness which we are to prefer before life itself. So our Lord expressly saith : ' When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another ', which is indeed, when it can be taken, the most unexceptionable way of avoiding persecution.

10. Yet think not that you can always avoid it, either by this or any other means. If ever that idle imagination steals into your heart, put it to flight by that earnest caution, ' Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.' ' Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.' But will this screen you from persecution ? Not unless you have more wisdom than your Master, or more innocence than the Lamb of God.

Neither desire to avoid it, to escape it wholly ; for if you do, you are none of His. If you escape the persecution, you escape the blessing ; the blessing of those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. If you are not persecuted for righteousness' sake, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. ' If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him. But if we deny Him, He will also deny us.'

11. Nay, rather, ' rejoice and be exceeding glad,' when

men persecute you for His sake, when they persecute you by reviling you, and by 'saying all manner of evil against you falsely'; which they will not fail to mix with every kind of persecution they must blacken you to excuse themselves: 'For so persecuted they the prophets which were before you,'—those who were most eminently holy in heart and life, yea, and all the righteous which ever have been from the beginning of the world. Rejoice, because by this mark also ye know unto whom ye belong, and 'because great is your reward in heaven'—the reward purchased by the blood of the covenant, and freely bestowed in proportion to your sufferings, as well as to your holiness of heart and life. 'Be exceeding glad', knowing that these 'light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.'

12. Meantime, let no persecution turn you out of the way of lowliness and meekness, of love and beneficence. 'Ye have heard' indeed 'that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth' (Matt. v. 38) and your miserable teachers have hence allowed you to avenge yourselves, to return evil for evil 'but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil,'—not thus; not by returning it in kind. 'But,' rather than do this, 'whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak

12. The bringing in here of verses 38-48 is ingenious, but, like the previous attempts to make the various portions of the criticism of the old law illustrations of the Beatitudes, it is rather forced. The old law sanctioned the *lex talionis*; in the Kingdom of God there is no room for this spirit. When Wesley calls those who said 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth' 'your miserable teachers,' he forgot that it was a part of the Mosaic law. See Exod. xxi. 23-5; Lev. xxiv. 20; Deut. xix. 21. Nor does he at-

tempt any explanation of the following three examples of the new spirit, though it is clear that to carry them out literally would make human society under present conditions impossible. They are to be regarded as illustrations, not as precepts. They are specific instances of the general law, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' and their application must be governed by that law. We are to deal with our fellow men, not in the spirit of selfish insistence on our rights, but with a sincere willingness to surrender our

also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.'

So invincible let thy meekness be. And be thy love suitable thereto. 'Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.' Only, give not away that which is another man's, that which is not thine own. Therefore, (1) Take care to owe no man anything for what thou owest is not thine own, but another man's. (2) Provide for those of thine own household. This also God hath required of thee, and what is necessary to sustain them in life and godliness is also not thine own. Then, (3) Give or lend all that remains, from day to day, or from year to year only, first, seeing thou canst not give or lend to all, remember the household of faith.

13. The meekness and love we are to feel, the kindness we are to show to them which persecute us for righteousness' sake, our blessed Lord describes farther in the following verses : O that they were engraven upon our hearts ! 'Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thy enemy' (Matt. v. 43, &c.) God indeed had said only the former part, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour' ; the children of the devil had added the latter, 'and hate thy enemy' ; 'But I say unto you,' (1) 'Love your enemies' : see that you bear a tender good-will to those who are most bitter of spirit against you ; who wish you all manner of evil. (2)

rights rather than seek revenge. Christ is not substituting a new set of precepts for the old ones, but is trying to inspire a new spirit which will make all precepts unnecessary. Nowhere is it truer than in regard to these sayings, 'The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.' Wesley proceeds to qualify the fourth example in a way which shows that he recognized the absurdity of any attempt to observe it literally. His sermon on the Use of Money (No. XLIV) should be read ; the divisions being (1) Get all you can ; (2) Save all you can ; (3) Give all you can,

the last being qualified as in the present paragraph.

13. It is not correct to say that the children of the devil added, 'Thou shalt hate thine enemy.' The actual words are not found in the O.T. ; but evidently our Lord meant to suggest that it was a part of the old law ; and the way in which the Jews were instructed to treat their enemies, and the terms in which the prophets and psalmists spoke of them, show that hatred of one's enemies was felt to be as much a duty as love to one's neighbours.

‘ Bless them that curse you.’ Are there any whose bitterness of spirit breaks forth in bitter words? who are continually cursing and reproaching you when you are present, and ‘ saying all evil against you ’ when absent? So much the rather do you bless : in conversing with them, use all mildness and softness of language. Reprove them, by repeating a better lesson before them ; by showing them how they ought to have spoken. And, in speaking of them, say all the good you can, without violating the rules of truth and justice. (3) ‘ Do good to them that hate you ’ : let your actions show that you are as real in love, as they in hatred. Return good for evil. ‘ Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.’ (4) If you can do nothing more, at least ‘ pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you.’ You can never be disabled from doing this ; nor can all their malice or violence hinder you. Pour out your souls to God, not only for those who did this once, but now repent ; this is a little thing : ‘ If thy brother, seven times a day, turn and say unto thee, I repent ’ (Luke xvii. 4) , that is, if, after ever so many relapses, he give thee reason to believe that he is really and thoroughly changed , then thou shalt forgive him, so as to trust him, to put him in thy bosom, as if he had never sinned against thee at all , but pray for, wrestle with God for, those that do not repent, that now despitefully use thee and persecute thee. Thus far forgive them, ‘ not until seven times only, but, until seventy times seven ’ (Matt. xviii. 22). Whether they repent or no, yea, though they appear farther and farther from it, yet show them this instance of kindness , ‘ that ye may be the children,’ that ye may approve yourselves the genuine children, ‘ of your Father which is in heaven ’ ; who shows His goodness by giving such blessings as they are capable of, even to His stubbornest enemies , ‘ who maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.’ ‘ For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? ’ (Matt. v. 46)—who pretend to no religion , whom ye yourselves acknowledge to be without God in the world. ‘ And if ye salute,’ show kindness in word or

deed to, 'your brethren,' your friends or kinsfolk, 'only; what do ye more than others?'—than those who have no religion at all? 'do not even the publicans so?' (Matt. v. 47). Nay, but follow ye a better pattern than them. In patience, in long-suffering, in mercy, in beneficence of every kind, to all, even to your bitterest persecutors; 'be ye,' Christians, 'perfect,' in kind, though not in degree, 'even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect' (Matt. v. 48).

IV Behold Christianity in its native form, as delivered by its great Author! This is the genuine religion of Jesus Christ! Such He presents it to him whose eyes are opened. See a picture of God so far as He is imitable by man! a picture drawn by God's own hand. 'Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish!' Or, rather, wonder and adore! Rather cry out, 'Is this the religion of Jesus of Nazareth? the religion which I persecuted? Let me no more be found even to fight against God. Lord, what wouldest Thou have me to do?' What beauty appears in the whole! How just a symmetry! What exact proportion in every part! How desirable is the happiness here described! How venerable, how lovely the holiness! This is the spirit of religion; the quintessence of it. These are indeed the fundamentals of Christianity. O that we may not be hearers of it only!—'like a man beholding his own face in a glass, who goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.' Nay, but let us steadily 'look into this perfect law of liberty, and continue therein.' Let us not rest, until every line thereof is transcribed into our own hearts. Let us watch, and pray, and believe, and love, and 'strive for the mastery,' till every part of it shall appear in our soul, graven there by the finger of God, till we are 'holy as He which hath called us is holy, perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect.'

SERMON XIX  
UPON OUR LORD'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT

DISCOURSE IV

THIS sermon was preached at West Street on February 3, 1747; and the substance of it no doubt was frequently given to the societies in London and Bristol in the course of the expositions already referred to. It is Wesley's criticism of the Mystic doctrine in relation to good works, as Sermon XII is in regard to the means of grace. It should be compared with the Preface to the *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1739), where he says that some of the hymns 'were wrote upon the scheme of the Mystic Divines. And these, it is owned, we had once in great veneration, as the best explainers of the gospel of Christ. But we are now convinced that we therein greatly erred, not knowing the Scriptures, neither the power of God.' He proceeds to criticize their teaching as to justification, their commendation of entire seclusion from men ('Holy solitaires,' he exclaims, 'is a phrase no more consistent with the gospel than holy adulterers'), and their substitution of contemplation for good works. The question became a very practical one with him when the Moravian quietism or 'stillness' began to infect the Fetter Lane society in the autumn of 1739, and ultimately led to his separation from it in July 1740. But Richard Bell and John Bray kept on tintinnabulating and hee-hawing, and it was many years before the Methodist societies quite got rid of this pernicious leaven. He was deeply grieved, too, at the later mystical developments in William Law's teaching, which began to manifest themselves about 1733. He was amazed and disgusted at the absurd crudities of his physical speculations; and he had no patience when he thought of the little divine in the pleasant retirement of his cottage at Putney, whilst he himself was running from Bristol to Newcastle, preaching every day, and on full stretch to arouse and save the souls of men. And when in 1741 Charles caught the disease, it was no wonder that he denounced the whole Mystical doctrine as 'this masterpiece of the wisdom from beneath, the fairest of all the devices wherewith Satan hath ever perverted the right ways of the Lord!'

✧ But in his cooler moments he was quite ready to appreciate the

better elements of Mysticism, and to admit that its earlier exponents were 'men of love, experimentally acquainted with true, inward religion; burning and shining lights, and such as had well deserved of the Church of Christ' (Sermon XII, i. 4). And when the passing years had mellowed him, he declares in his preface to her Life, written in 1776, that Madam Guyon, with all her mistakes, was 'good in an eminent degree.' 'So that, upon the whole,' he concludes, 'I know not whether we may not search many centuries to find another woman who was such a pattern of true holiness.' The student should read Prof. William James's chapter on 'Mysticism' in *Varieties of Religious Experience*, where its weakness and its strength are both lucidly set forth. Both types of character, the active and the contemplative, are necessary for the completeness of the Church; and Methodism has room, and a sphere of service, for both a Hugh Price Hughes and a William Burt Pope; and neither hand nor eye can say to eye or hand, 'I have no need of thee.'

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*Ye are the salt of the earth : but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted ? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.*

*Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick ; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.*

*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*—MATT. v. 13-16.

I. THE beauty of holiness, of that inward man of the heart which is renewed after the image of God, cannot but strike every eye which God hath opened—every enlightened understanding. The ornament of a meek, humble, loving spirit, will at least excite the approbation of all those who are capable, in any degree, of discerning spiritual good and evil. From the hour men begin to emerge out of the darkness which covers the giddy, unthinking world, they cannot but perceive how desirable a thing it is to be thus transformed into the likeness of Him that created us. This inward religion bears the shape of God so visibly impressed upon it, that a soul must be wholly immersed in flesh and blood when he can doubt of its divine original. We may say of this, in

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Par. 1. The Son of God is to the      the sun, or the impression of the  
Father as the rays of light are to      seal on the clay to the seal itself :



a secondary sense, even as of the Son of God Himself, that it is 'the brightness of His glory, the express image of His person'—*ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ*—'the beaming forth of His' eternal 'glory', and yet so tempered and softened, that even the children of men may herein see God and live, *χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ*—'the character, the stamp, the living impression of His person,' who is the fountain of beauty and love, the original source of all excellency and perfection.

2. If religion, therefore, were carried no farther than this, they could have no doubt concerning it, they should have no objection against pursuing it with the whole ardour of their souls. 'But why,' say they, 'is it clogged with other things? What need of loading it with *doing* and *suffering*? These are what damps the vigour of the soul, and sinks it down to earth again. Is it not enough to "follow after charity", to soar upon the wings of love? Will it not suffice to worship God, who is a Spirit, with the spirit of our minds, without encumbering ourselves with outward things, or even thinking of them at all? Is it not better, that the whole extent of our thought should be taken up with high and heavenly contemplation, and that instead of busying ourselves at all about externals, we should only commune with God in our hearts?'

3. Many eminent men have spoken thus, have advised us 'to cease from all outward action', wholly to withdraw from the world; to leave the body behind us, to abstract ourselves from all sensible things, to have no concern at all about outward religion, but *to work all virtues in the will*, as the far

the sun cannot be seen without the rays of light that flow from it; the seal can be best interpreted from its impression. And it is also our function to show forth the praises of Him who hath called us from darkness into His marvellous light.

3. So Law, in *Spirit of Prayer*, Part I, p. 77: 'Stop therefore all self-activity; listen not to the suggestions of thy own reason, run not

on in thy own will, but be retired, silent, passive, and humbly attentive to this new-risen light within thee.' Part II, p. 163: 'Retire from the world, and all conversation, only for *one month*, neither write nor read, nor debate any thing in private with yourself; stop all the former workings of your heart and mind; and with all the strength of your heart, stand all this month as

more excellent way, more perfective of the soul as well as more acceptable to God.

4. It needed not that any should tell our Lord of this master-piece of the wisdom from beneath, this fairest of all the devices wherewith Satan hath ever perverted the right ways of the Lord ! And O ! what instruments hath he found, from time to time, to employ in this his service, to wield this grand engine of hell against some of the most important truths of God !—men that would ‘ deceive, if it were possible, the very elect,’ the men of faith and love , yea, that have for a season deceived and led away no inconsiderable number of them, who have fallen in all ages into the gilded snare, and hardly escaped with the skin of their teeth.

5. But has our Lord been wanting on His part ? Has He not sufficiently guarded us against this pleasing delusion ? Has He not armed us here with armour of proof against Satan ‘ transformed into an angel of light ’ ? Yea, verily : He here defends, in the clearest and strongest manner, the active, patient religion He had just described. What can be fuller and plainer than the words He immediately subjoins to what He had said of doing and suffering ? ‘ Ye are the salt of the earth : but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted ? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick , and it giveth light to all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.’

In order fully to explain and enforce these important words, I shall endeavour to show, first, that Christianity is essentially a social religion ; and that to ~~turn~~ it into a solitary one is to

continually as you can, in this following form of prayer to God.’ In *Spirit of Love*, Part I, p. 3, he says : ‘ This is the ground and original of the spirit of love in the creature ; it is and must be a will to all goodness, and you have not the spirit of

love till you have this will to all goodness at all times and on all occasions.’

5. In the original it is ‘ *the* bushel,’ ‘ *the* candlestick,’ or rather ‘ lamp-stand.’

destroy it. Secondly, that to conceal this religion is impossible, as well as utterly contrary to the design of its Author. I shall, thirdly, answer some objections ; and conclude the whole with a practical application.

I. 1. First. I shall endeavour to show, that Christianity is essentially a social religion , and that to turn it into a solitary religion, is indeed to destroy it.

By Christianity, I mean that method of worshipping God which is here revealed to man by Jesus Christ. When I say, This is essentially a social religion, I mean not only that it cannot subsist so well, but that it cannot subsist at all, without society,—without living and conversing with other men. And in showing this, I shall confine myself to those considerations which will arise from the very discourse before us. But if this be shown, then, doubtless, to turn this religion into a solitary one is to destroy it.

Not that we can in any wise condemn the intermixing solitude or retirement with society. This is not only allowable, but expedient ; nay, it is necessary, as daily experience shows, for every one that either already is, or desires to be a real Christian. It can hardly be, that we should spend one entire day in a continued intercourse with men, without suffering loss in our soul, and in some measure grieving the Holy Spirit of God. We have need daily to retire from the world, at least morning and evening, to converse with God, to commune more freely with our Father which is in secret. Nor indeed can a man of experience condemn even longer seasons of religious retirement, so they do not imply any neglect of the worldly employ wherein the providence of God has placed us.

2. Yet such retirement must not swallow up all our time this would be to destroy, not advance, true religion. For, that the religion described by our Lord in the foregoing words cannot subsist without society, without our living and conversing with other men, is manifest from hence, that several of the most essential branches thereof can have no place if we have no intercourse with the world.

3. There is no disposition, for instance, which is more essential to Christianity than meekness. Now although this, as it implies resignation to God, or patience in pain and sickness, may subsist in a desert, in a hermit's cell, in total solitude; yet as it implies (which it no less necessarily does) mildness, gentleness, and long-suffering, it cannot possibly have a being, it has no place under heaven, without an intercourse with other men: so that to attempt turning this into a solitary virtue is to destroy it from the face of the earth.

4. Another necessary branch of true Christianity is peace-making, or doing of good. That this is equally essential with any of the other parts of the religion of Jesus Christ, there can be no stronger argument to evince (and therefore it would be absurd to allege any other), than that it is here inserted in the original plan He has laid down of the fundamentals of His religion. Therefore, to set aside this is the same daring insult on the authority of our Great Master as to set aside mercifulness, purity of heart, or any other branch of His institution. But this is apparently set aside by all who call us to the wilderness; who recommend entire solitude either to the babes, or the young men, or the fathers in Christ. For will any man affirm that a solitary Christian (so called, though it is little less than a contradiction in terms) can be a merciful man,—that is, one that takes every opportunity of doing all good to all men? What can be more plain than that this fundamental branch of the religion of Jesus Christ cannot possibly subsist without society, without our living and conversing with other men?

5. 'But is it not expedient, however,' one might naturally ask, 'to converse only with good men,—only with those whom we know to be meek and merciful, holy of heart, and holy of life? Is it not expedient to refrain from any conversation or intercourse with men of the opposite character,—men who do not obey, perhaps do not believe, the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ?' The advice of St. Paul to the Christians at Corinth

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I. 4. 'Evince': 'to prove'—a common use in the eighteenth century.

'Apparently'; i.e. obviously, as clearly appears.

may seem to favour this : ' I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators ' (1 Cor. v. 9). And it is certainly not advisable so to company with them, or with any of the workers of iniquity, as to have any particular familiarity or any strictness of friendship with them. To contract or continue an intimacy with any such is no way expedient for a Christian. It must necessarily expose him to abundance of dangers and snares, out of which he can have no reasonable hope of deliverance.

But the Apostle does not forbid us to have any intercourse at all even with the men that know not God : ' For then,' says he, ' ye must needs go out of the world ' ; which he could never advise them to do. But he subjoins, ' If any man that is called a brother,' that professes himself a Christian, ' be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner ' (1 Cor. v. 11), ' now I have written unto you not to keep company ' with him ; ' with such an one no not to eat.' This must necessarily imply, that we break off all familiarity, all intimacy of acquaintance, with him. ' Yet count him not,' saith the Apostle elsewhere, ' as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother ' (2 Thess. iii. 15) ; plainly showing that even in such a case as this, we are not to renounce all fellowship with him. So that here is no advice to separate wholly even from wicked men. Yea, these very words teach us quite the contrary.

6. Much more the words of our Lord , who is so far from directing us to break off all commerce with the world, that without it, according to His account of Christianity, we cannot be Christians at all. It would be easy to show, that some intercourse even with ungodly and unholy men is absolutely needful, in order to the full exertion of every temper which He has described as the way to the kingdom ; that it is indispensably necessary, in order to the complete exercise of poverty of spirit, of mourning, and of every other disposition which has a place here, in the genuine religion of Jesus Christ. Yea, it is necessary to the very being of several of them : of that meekness, for example, which, instead of demanding ' an eye for an eye, or a tooth for a tooth,' doth ' not resist

evil,' but cause us rather, when smitten 'on the right cheek, to turn the other also'; of that mercifulness, whereby we 'love our enemies, bless them that curse us, do good to them that hate us, and pray for them which despitefully use us and persecute us'; and of that complication of love and all holy tempers which is exercised in suffering for 'righteousness' sake. Now all these, it is clear, could have no being, were we to have no commerce with any but real Christians.

7. Indeed, were we wholly to separate ourselves from sinners, how could we possibly answer that character which our Lord gives us in these very words? 'Ye' (Christians, ye that are lowly, serious, and meek; ye that hunger after righteousness, that love God and man, that do good to all, and therefore suffer evil; ye) 'are the salt of the earth': it is your very nature to season whatever is round about you. It is the nature of the divine savour which is in you, to spread to whatsoever you touch; to diffuse itself, on every side, to all those among whom you are. This is the great reason why the providence of God has so mingled you together with other men, that whatever grace you have received of God may through you be communicated to others, that every holy temper and word and work of yours may have an influence on them also. By this means a check will, in some measure, be given to the corruption which is in the world; and a small part, at least, saved from the general infection, and rendered holy and pure before God.

8. That we may the more diligently labour to season all we can with every holy and heavenly temper, our Lord pro-

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7. The function of salt is to preserve fish or flesh from putrefaction; that is, from resolution into simpler molecules. Flesh is made up of highly complex molecules; these under the influence of ferments are split up into simpler and more primitive ones. Salt, by inhibiting the action of the ferments, prevents this breaking down. So the tendency of the leaven of sin is to break down the complex groupings of the social organism, and to reduce it to a

number of selfish individuals, each seeking his own advantage. It is the presence in society of men who are actuated by unselfish and social motives that retards and tends to prevent this dissolution. The effect of saline solutions in preventing wounds from becoming septic has been very notable in the late war; and they would appear to do so by stimulating the vital resistances. The parallel is suggestive.

ceeds to show the desperate state of those who do not impart the religion they have received ; which indeed they cannot possibly fail to do, so long as it remains in their own hearts. ' If the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted ? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men ' if ye who were holy and heavenly-minded, and consequently zealous of good works, have no longer that savour in yourselves, and do therefore no longer season others, if you are grown flat, insipid, dead, both careless of your own souls, and useless to the souls of other men, wherewith shall ye be salted ? How shall ye be recovered ? What help ? What hope ? Can tasteless salt be restored to its savour ? No ; ' it is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out,' even as the mire in the streets, ' and to be trodden under foot of men,' to be overwhelmed with everlasting contempt. If ye had never known the Lord, there might have been hope,—if ye had never been ' found in Him ' but what can you now say to that, His solemn declaration, just parallel to what He hath here spoken ? ' Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit, He,' the Father, ' taketh away. He that abideth in Me, and I in him, bringeth forth much fruit.' ' If a man abide not in Me,' or do not bring forth fruit, ' he is cast out as a branch, and withered ; and men gather them,' not to plant them again, but ' to cast them into the fire ' (John xv. 2, 5, 6).

9. Toward those who have never tasted of the good word, God is indeed pitiful and of tender mercy. But justice takes place with regard to those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and have afterwards turned back ' from the holy commandment ' then ' delivered to them.' ' For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened ' (Heb. vi. 4, &c.), in whose hearts God had once shined, to enlighten them with

9. The reference in Heb. vi. 4 is to the sin of open apostasy on the part of the Jewish converts ; the deliberate public disavowal of Christ. As Westcott points out, the use of the active voice ' to renew ' limits the strict application of the words

to human agency. Humanly speaking, in such a case there is no hope of repentance ; ' with men it is impossible ; but not with God ; for with God all things are possible.' It will be remembered that this word was spoken with reference to a

the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ ; ' who have tasted of the heavenly gift,' of redemption in His blood, the forgiveness of sins ; ' and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,' of lowliness, of meekness, and of the love of God and man shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost which was given unto them ; and ' have fallen away'—καὶ παραπεσόντας (here is not a supposition, but a flat declaration of matter of fact), ' to renew them again unto repentance , seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame.

But that none may misunderstand these awful words, it should be carefully observed, (1) Who they are that are here spoken of , namely, they, and they only, who were once thus ' enlightened ' ; they only, ' who did taste of ' that ' heavenly gift, and were ' thus ' made partakers of the Holy Ghost.' So that all who have not experienced these things are wholly unconcerned in this scripture. (2) What that falling away is, which is here spoken of : it is an absolute, total apostasy. A believer may fall, and not fall away. He may fall and rise again. And if he should fall, even into sin, yet this case, dreadful as it is, is not desperate. For ' we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous , and He is the propitiation for our sins.' But let him above all things beware, lest his ' heart be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin ' ; lest he should sink lower and lower, till he wholly fall away, till he become as salt that hath lost its savour : for if we thus sin wilfully, after we have received the experimental ' knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins , but a certain fearful looking for of judgement and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.'

II. 1. ' But although we may not wholly separate ourselves from mankind, although it be granted we ought to season them with the religion which God has wrought in our hearts,

somewhat similar case, the conversion of a rich man, which our Lord had just declared to be harder than for a camel to go through a needle's eye. See the additional note on

this passage in Westcott's *Hebrews*.

In 1 John ii. 2 the ' our ' is in obvious contrast to ' of the whole world ' ; and the sins therefore are those committed by the believer.



yet may not this be done insensibly? May we not convey this into others in a secret and almost imperceptible manner, so that scarce any one shall be able to observe how or when it is done?—even as salt conveys its own savour into that which is seasoned thereby, without any noise, and without being liable to any outward observation. And if so, although we do not go out of the world, yet we may lie hid in it. We may thus far keep our religion to ourselves, and not offend those whom we cannot help.’

2. Of this plausible reasoning of flesh and blood our Lord was well aware also: and He has given a full answer to it in those words which come now to be considered; in explaining which I shall endeavour to show, as I proposed to do in the second place, that so long as true religion abides in our hearts, it is impossible to conceal it, as well as absolutely contrary to the design of its great Author.

And, first, it is impossible for any that have it, to conceal the religion of Jesus Christ. This our Lord makes plain beyond all contradiction, by a two-fold comparison: ‘Ye are the light of the world: a city set upon a hill cannot be hid.’ Ye Christians are ‘the light of the world,’ with regard both to your tempers and actions. Your holiness makes you as conspicuous as the sun in the midst of heaven. As ye cannot go out of the world, so neither can ye stay in it without appearing to all mankind. Ye may not flee from men; and while ye are among them, it is impossible to hide your lowliness and meekness, and those other dispositions whereby ye aspire to be perfect as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. Love cannot be hid any more than light; and least of all, when it shines forth in action, when ye exercise yourselves in the labour of love, in beneficence of every kind. As well may men think to hide a city, as to hide a Christian; yea, as well may they

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II. 2. As all the light in the world can be ultimately traced back to the energy of the sun, so all the light in the Christian is the reflection of the light that has shone upon him from the face of Jesus Christ. He is but

the burning and shining lamp. Christ has shone upon him, and all that has thus been made manifest is itself light by reflecting the light that has given it its manifest colour and form.

conceal a city set upon a hill, as a holy, zealous, active lover of God and man.

3. It is true, men who love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil, will take all possible pains to prove, that the light which is in you is darkness. They will say evil, all manner of evil, falsely, of the good which is in you, they will lay to your charge that which is farthest from your thoughts, which is the very reverse of all you are, and all you do. And your patient continuance in well-doing, your meek suffering all things for the Lord's sake, your calm, humble joy in the midst of persecution, your unwearied labour to overcome evil with good, will make you still more visible and conspicuous than ye were before.

4. So impossible it is, to keep our religion from being seen, unless we cast it away; so vain is the thought of hiding the light, unless by putting it out! Sure it is, that a secret, unobserved religion cannot be the religion of Jesus Christ. Whatever religion can be concealed, is not Christianity. If a Christian could be hid, he could not be compared to a city set upon a hill; to the light of the world, the sun shining from heaven, and seen by all the world below. Never, therefore, let it enter into the heart of him whom God hath renewed in the spirit of his mind, to hide that light, to keep his religion to himself; especially considering it is not only impossible to conceal true Christianity, but likewise absolutely contrary to the design of the great Author of it.

5. This plainly appears from the following words 'Neither do men light a candle to put it under a bushel.' As if he had said, As men do not light a candle, only to cover and conceal it, so neither does God enlighten any soul with His glorious knowledge and love, to have it covered or concealed, either by prudence, falsely so called, or shame, or voluntary humility, to have it hid either in a desert, or in the world; either by avoiding men, or in conversing with them. 'But they put it on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house': in like manner, it is the design of God that every Christian should be in an open point of view; that he may give light to all around, that he may visibly express the religion of Jesus Christ.

6. Thus hath God in all ages spoken to the world, not only by precept, but by example also. He hath 'not left Himself without witness,' in any nation where the sound of the gospel hath gone forth, without a few who have testified His truth by their lives as well as their words. These have been 'as lights shining in a dark place.' And from time to time they have been the means of enlightening some, of preserving a remnant, a little seed which was 'counted unto the Lord for a generation.' They have led a few poor sheep out of the darkness of the world, and guided their feet into the way of peace.

7. One might imagine that, where both Scripture and the reason of things speak so clearly and expressly, there could not be much advanced on the other side, at least not with any appearance of truth. But they who imagine thus know little of the depths of Satan. After all that Scripture and reason have said, so exceeding plausible are the pretences for solitary religion, for a Christian's going out of the world, or at least hiding himself in it, that we need all the wisdom of God to see through the snare, and all the power of God to escape it; so many and strong are the objections which have been brought against being social, open, active Christians.

III. 1. To answer these, was the third thing which I proposed. And, first, it has been often objected, that religion does not lie in outward things, but in the heart, the inmost soul, that it is the union of the soul with God, the life of God in the soul of man; that outside religion is nothing worth, seeing God 'delighteth not in burnt-offerings,' in outward services, but a pure and holy heart is the 'sacrifice He will not despise.'

I answer, It is most true, that the root of religion lies in the heart, in the inmost soul, that this is the union of the soul with God, the life of God in the soul of man. But if this root be really in the heart, it cannot but put forth branches. And these are the several instances of outward obedience, which partake of the same nature with the root; and, consequently, are not only marks or signs, but substantial parts, of religion.

It is also true, that bare outside religion, which has no root in the heart, is nothing worth, that God delighteth not in *such* outward services, no more than in Jewish burnt-offerings; and that a pure and holy heart is a sacrifice with which He is always well pleased. But He is also well pleased with all that outward service which arises from the heart; with the sacrifice of our prayers (whether public or private), of our praises and thanksgivings, with the sacrifice of our goods, humbly devoted to Him, and employed wholly to His glory; and with that of our bodies, which He peculiarly claims, which the Apostle beseeches us, 'by the mercies of God, to present unto Him, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God.'

2. A second objection, nearly related to this, is, that love is all in all; that it is 'the fulfilling of the law,' 'the end of the commandment,' of every commandment of God; that all we do, and all we suffer, if we have not charity or love, profiteth us nothing; and therefore the Apostle directs us to 'follow after charity,' and terms this 'the more excellent way.'

I answer, It is granted, that the love of God and man, arising from faith unfeigned, is all in all, the fulfilling of the law, the end of every commandment of God. It is true, that without this, whatever we do, whatever we suffer, profits us nothing. But it does not follow, that love is all in such a sense as to supersede either faith or good works. It is 'the fulfilling of the law,' not by releasing us from but by constraining us to obey it. It is 'the end of the commandment,' as every commandment leads to and centres in it. It is allowed, that whatever we do or suffer without love profits us nothing: but withal, whatever we do or suffer in love, though it were only the suffering reproach for Christ, or the giving a cup of cold water in His name, it shall in no wise lose its reward.

3. 'But does not the Apostle direct us to "follow after charity"? And does he not term it "a more excellent way"? '—He does direct us to 'follow after charity'; but not after that alone. His words are, 'Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts' (1 Cor. xiv. 1). Yea, 'follow after charity'; and desire to spend and be spent for your brethren. 'Follow

after charity' ; and, as you have opportunity, do good to all men.

In the same verse wherein he terms this, the way of love, ' a more excellent way,' he directs the Corinthians to desire other gifts beside it, yea, to desire them earnestly. ' Covet earnestly,' saith he, ' the best gifts ; and yet I show unto you a more excellent way ' (1 Cor. xii. 31). More excellent than what ? Than the gifts of healing, of speaking with tongues, and of interpreting, mentioned in the preceding verses ; but not more excellent than the way of obedience. Of this the Apostle is not speaking, neither is he speaking of outward religion at all so that this text is quite wide of the present question.

But suppose the Apostle had been speaking of outward as well as inward religion, and comparing them together ; suppose, in the comparison, he had given the preference ever so much to the latter ; suppose he had preferred (as he justly might) a loving heart, before all outward works whatever ; yet it would not follow that we were to reject either one or the other. No, God hath joined them together from the beginning of the world, and let not man put them asunder.

4. ' But " God is a Spirit ; and they that worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth." And is not this enough ? Nay, ought we not to employ the whole strength of our mind herein ? Does not attending to outward things clog the soul, that it cannot soar aloft in holy contemplation ? Does it not damp the vigour of our thought ? Has it not a natural tendency to encumber and distract the mind ? Whereas St. Paul would have us to be " without carefulness," and to " wait upon the Lord without distraction." '

I answer, ' God is a Spirit ; and they that worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth.' Yea, and this is enough : we ought to employ the whole strength of our mind therein. But then I would ask, What is it to worship God, a Spirit, in spirit and in truth ? Why, it is to worship Him with our spirit ; to worship Him in that manner which none but spirits are capable of. It is to believe in Him, as a wise, just, holy Being, of purer eyes than to behold iniquity ; and

yet merciful, gracious, and longsuffering ; forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin ; casting all our sins behind His back, and accepting us in the Beloved. It is, to love Him, to delight in Him, to desire Him, with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength ; to imitate Him we love, by purifying ourselves even as He is pure ; and to obey Him whom we love, and in whom we believe, both in thought, and word, and work. Consequently, one branch of the worshipping God in spirit and in truth is, the keeping His outward commandments. To glorify Him, therefore, with our bodies as well as with our spirits, to go through outward work with hearts lifted up to Him ; to make our daily employment a sacrifice to God, to buy and sell, to eat and drink, to His glory,—this is worshipping God in spirit and in truth, as much as the praying to Him in a wilderness.

5. But if so, then contemplation is only one way of worshipping God in spirit and in truth. Therefore to give ourselves up entirely to this, would be to destroy many branches of spiritual worship, all equally acceptable to God, and equally profitable, not hurtful, to the soul. For it is a great mistake, to suppose that an attention to those outward things, whereto the providence of God hath called us, is any clog to a Christian, or any hindrance at all to his always seeing Him that is invisible. It does not at all damp the ardour of his thought, it does not encumber or distract his mind ; it gives him no uneasy or hurtful care, who does it all as unto the Lord, who hath learned, whatsoever he doeth in word or deed, to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, having only one eye of the soul, which moves round on outward things, and one immovably fixed on God. Learn what this meaneth, ye poor recluses,

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III. 5. Wesley was a little lacking in humour, though he had wit enough and to spare ; otherwise he could not have perpetrated the extraordinary figure of a man 'having only one eye of the soul which moves round on outward things, and one immovably fixed on God' !

The quotation is the third verse of Charles Wesley's hymn 'For a

Believer in Worldly Business,' No. 6 in *Hymns for those that Seek and those that have Redemption* (1747). It is, with one verse omitted, Hymn 587 in the Methodist Hymn-Book. 'Lift' is clearly the infinitive governed by 'dost' ; not the imperative. There should be a comma, as in the original, after 'multitudes.'

that you may clearly discern your own littleness of faith : yea, that you may no longer judge others by yourselves, go and learn what that meaneth,—

Thou, O Lord, in tender love,  
 Dost all my burdens bear ;  
 Lift my heart to things above,  
 And fix it ever there.  
 Calm on tumult's wheel I sit ;  
 'Midst busy multitudes alone ;  
 Sweetly waiting at Thy feet,  
 Till all Thy will be done.

6. But the grand objection is still behind. ' We appeal,' say they, ' to experience. Our light did shine ; we used outward things many years , and yet they profited nothing. We attended on all the ordinances , but we were no better for it , nor indeed any one else : nay, we were the worse ; for we fancied ourselves Christians for so doing, when we knew not what Christianity meant.'

I allow the fact : I allow that you and ten thousand more have thus abused the ordinances of God , mistaking the means for the end , supposing that the doing these, or some other outward works, either was the religion of Jesus Christ, or would be accepted in the place of it. But let the abuse be taken away, and the use remain. Now use all outward things, but use them with a constant eye to the renewal of your soul in righteousness and true holiness.

7. But this is not all : they affirm, ' Experience likewise shows, that the trying to do good is but lost labour. What does it avail to feed or clothe men's bodies, if they are just dropping into everlasting fire ? And what good can any man do to their souls ? If these are changed, God doeth it Himself. Besides, all men are either good, at least desirous so to be, or obstinately evil. Now the former have no need of us ; let them ask help of God, and it shall be given them : and the latter will receive no help of us. Nay, and our Lord forbids to " cast our pearls before swine." '

I answer, (1) Whether they will finally be lost or saved, you are expressly commanded to feed the hungry, and clothe

the naked. If you can, and do not, whatever becomes of them, you shall go away into everlasting fire. (2) Though it is God only changes hearts, yet He generally doeth it by man. It is our part to do all that in us lies, as diligently as if we could change them ourselves, and then to leave the event to Him. (3) God, in answer to their prayers, builds up His children by each other in every good gift, nourishing and strengthening the whole 'body by that which every joint supplieth.' So that 'the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee', no, nor even 'the head to the feet, I have no need of you.' Lastly. How are you assured, that the persons before you are dogs or swine? Judge them not, until you have tried. 'How knowest thou, O man, but thou mayest gain thy brother'—but thou mayest, under God, save his soul from death? When he spurns thy love, and blasphemes the good word, then it is time to give him up to God.

8. 'We have tried; we have laboured to reform sinners, and what did it avail? On many we could make no impression at all: and if some were changed for a while, yet their goodness was but as the morning dew, and they were soon as bad, nay, worse than ever so that we only hurt them, and ourselves too, for our minds were hurried and discomposed,—perhaps filled with anger instead of love: therefore, we had better have kept our religion to ourselves.'

It is very possible this fact also may be true, that you have tried to do good, and have not succeeded, yea, that those who seemed reformed, relapsed into sin, and their last state was worse than the first. And what marvel? Is the servant above his Master? But how often did He strive to save sinners, and they would not hear, or, when they had followed Him awhile, they turned back as a dog to his vomit! But He did not therefore desist from striving to do good: no more should you, whatever your success be. It is your part to do as you are commanded: the event is in the hand of God. You are not accountable for this—leave it to Him, who orders all things well. 'In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper' (Eccles. xi. 6).



But the trial hurries and frets your own soul. Perhaps it did so for this very reason, because you thought you was accountable for the event, which no man is, nor indeed can be; or perhaps, because you was off your guard—you was not watchful over your own spirit. But this is no reason for disobeying God. Try again: but try more warily than before. Do good (as you forgive) 'not seven times only, but until seventy times seven.' Only be wiser by experience: attempt it every time more cautiously than before. Be more humbled before God, more deeply convinced that of yourself you can do nothing. Be more jealous over your own spirit, more gentle, and watchful unto prayer. Thus 'cast your bread upon the waters, and you shall find it again after many days.'

IV 1. Notwithstanding all these plausible pretences for hiding it, 'let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.' This is the practical application which our Lord Himself makes of the foregoing considerations.

'Let your light so shine,'—your lowliness of heart, your gentleness, and meekness of wisdom, your serious, weighty concern for the things of eternity, and sorrow for the sins and miseries of men, your earnest desire of universal holiness, and full happiness in God; your tender goodwill to all mankind, and fervent love to your supreme Benefactor. Endeavour not to conceal this light, wherewith God hath enlightened your soul; but let it shine before men, before all with whom you are, in the whole tenor of your conversation. Let it shine still more eminently in your actions, in your doing all possible good to all men; and in your suffering for righteousness' sake, while you 'rejoice and are exceeding glad,' knowing that 'great is your reward in heaven.'

2. 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works,'—so far let a Christian be from ever designing or desiring to conceal his religion! On the contrary, let it be your desire, not to conceal it, not to put the light under a bushel. Let it be your care to place it 'on a candlestick, that it may give light to all that are in the house.' Only take

heed, not to seek your own praise herein, not to desire any honour to yourselves. But let it be your sole aim, that all who see your good works may 'glorify your Father which is in heaven.'

3. Be this your one ultimate end in all things. With this view, be plain, open, undisguised. Let your love be without dissimulation why should you hide fair, disinterested love? Let there be no guile found in your mouth: let your words be the genuine picture of your heart. Let there be no darkness or reservedness in your conversation, no disguise in your behaviour. Leave this to those who have other designs in view, designs which will not bear the light. Be ye artless and simple to all mankind; that all may see the grace of God which is in you. And although some will harden their hearts, yet others will take knowledge that ye have been with Jesus, and, by returning themselves to the great Bishop of their souls, 'glorify your Father which is in heaven.'

4. With this one design, that men may glorify God in you, go on in His name, and in the power of His might. Be not ashamed even to stand alone, so it be in the ways of God. Let the light which is in your heart shine in all good works, both works of piety and works of mercy. And in order to enlarge your ability of doing good, renounce all superfluities. Cut off all unnecessary expense in food, in furniture, in apparel. Be a good steward of every gift of God, even of these His lowest gifts. Cut off all unnecessary expense of time, all needless or useless employments; and 'whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.' In a word, be thou full of faith and love; do good, suffer evil. And herein be thou 'steadfast, unmovable'; yea, 'always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as thou knowest that thy labour is not in vain in the Lord.'

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IV. 3. In his letter to the Moravian Church, September 1738, Wesley asks them, 'Do you not use cunning, guile, or dissimulation in

many cases? Are you not of a close, dark, reserved temper and behaviour?'

## SERMON XX

### UPON OUR LORD'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT

#### DISCOURSE V

ON May 15, 1739, the *Journal* records: 'As I was expounding in the Back Lane on the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, many who had before been righteous in their own eyes abhorred themselves as in dust and ashes. But two, who seemed to be more deeply convinced than the rest, did not long sorrow as men without hope, but found in that hour that they had "an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."' Back Lane lies in the eastern part of Bristol, between Jacob Street and Old Market Street. Wesley had preached there for the first time on Tuesday, April 17, 1739. The service was held in an upper room; and on that occasion the weight of the congregation made the floor give way; but it did not sink far, and the sermon was duly concluded. This sermon is also recorded as preached at Redriff (or Rotherhithe) on July 11, 1740; and the text, Matt. v. 20, is set down half a dozen times in the sermon list between 1747 and 1759. The favourite sermon on the Pharisee and the Publican was no doubt much on the same lines as the latter part of this discourse.

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*Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets : I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*

*For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*

*Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven : but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

*For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.—MATT. V. 17–20.*

I. AMONG the multitude of reproaches which fell upon Him who 'was despised and rejected of men,' it could not fail

to be one, that He was a teacher of novelties, an introducer of a *new religion*. This might be affirmed with the more colour, because many of the expressions He had used were not common among the Jews: either they did not use them at all, or not in the same sense, not in so full and strong a meaning. Add to this, that the worshipping God 'in spirit and in truth' must always appear a new religion to those who have hitherto known nothing but outside worship, nothing but the 'form of godliness.'

2. And it is not improbable, some might hope it was so; that He was abolishing the old religion, and bringing in another—one which, they might flatter themselves, would be an easier way to heaven. But our Lord refutes, in these words, both the vain hopes of the one, and the groundless calumnies of the other.

I shall consider them in the same order as they lie, taking each verse for a distinct head of discourse.

I. 1. And first, 'Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.'

The ritual or ceremonial law, delivered by Moses to the children of Israel, containing all the injunctions and ordinances which related to the old sacrifices and service of the temple, our Lord indeed did come to destroy, to dissolve, and utterly abolish. To this bear all the Apostles witness, not only

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I. par. 1. The view taken in this and the following paragraph needs some correction. The ceremonial law was not only 'designed for a temporary restraint,' but was typical and prophetic. These regulations were, as St. Paul says (Col. ii. 17), 'a shadow of the things to come.' Now, every shadow is cast by a substance, or body, with which it corresponds, and that body was 'of Christ.' The altar of sacrifice was a shadow of the Cross, the Temple a shadow of the Church, the

Passover a shadow of the Lord's Supper, Circumcision a shadow of Baptism, and so on. These laws are a part of the Scripture which bore witness to Christ; and He came, not to 'destroy, dissolve, and utterly abolish,' but to fulfil them. They were only destroyed by Him as the bud is destroyed by the flower or the child by the man. The shadow is superseded by the substance, but it has a relation to it which is often most helpful and illuminating.

Barnabas and Paul, who vehemently withstood those who taught that Christians ought 'to keep the law of Moses' (Acts xv. 5), not only St. Peter, who termed the insisting on this, on the observance of the ritual law, a 'tempting God,' and 'putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers,' saith he, 'nor we, were able to bear', but all the Apostles, elders, and brethren, being assembled with one accord (verse 22), declared, that to command them to keep this law, was to 'subvert their souls', and that 'it seemed good to the Holy Ghost' and to them, to lay no such burden upon them (verse 28). This 'hand-writing of ordinances our Lord did blot out, take away, and nail to His cross.'

2. But the moral law, contained in the Ten Commandments, and enforced by the prophets, He did not take away. It was not the design of His coming to revoke any part of this. This is a law which never can be broken, which 'stands fast as the faithful witness in heaven.' The moral stands on an entirely different foundation from the ceremonial or ritual law, which was only designed for a temporary restraint upon a disobedient and stiffnecked people, whereas this was from the beginning of the world, being 'written not on tables of stone,' but on the hearts of all the children of men, when they came out of the hands of the Creator. And, however the letters once wrote by the finger of God are now in a great measure defaced by sin, yet can they not wholly be blotted out, while we have any consciousness of good and evil. Every part of this law must remain in force upon all mankind, and in all ages, as not depending either on time or place, or any other circumstances liable to change, but on the nature of God, and the nature of man, and their unchangeable relation to each other.

3. 'I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.' Some have

2. 'The moral law He did not take away.' A more exact statement of the relation of Christianity to the moral law will be found in Sermon XXIX, 3, where it is shown that Christianity set aside the

Jewish dispensation, and that the moral law itself, though it could never pass away, yet henceforward stood on a different foundation. See note on iii. 7 below.

conceived our Lord to mean, I am come to fulfil this, by My entire and perfect obedience to it. And it cannot be doubted but He did, in this sense, fulfil every part of it. But this does not appear to be what He intends here, being foreign to the scope of His present discourse. Without question, His meaning in this place is (consistently with all that goes before and follows after), I am come to establish it in its fullness, in spite of all the glosses of men: I am come to place in a full and clear view whatsoever was dark or obscure therein. I am come to declare the true and full import of every part of it, to show the length and breadth, the entire extent, of every commandment contained therein, and the height and depth, the inconceivable purity and spirituality of it in all its branches.

4. And this our Lord has abundantly performed in the preceding and subsequent parts of the discourse before us; in which He has not introduced a new religion into the world, but the same which was from the beginning,—a religion, the substance of which is, without question, as old as the creation, being coeval with man, and having proceeded from God at the very time when ‘man became a living soul’ (the *substance*, I say; for some circumstances of it now relate to man as a fallen creature); a religion witnessed to both by the law and by the prophets, in all succeeding generations. Yet was it never so fully explained, nor so thoroughly understood, till the great Author of it Himself condescended to give mankind this authentic comment on all the essential branches of it; at the same time declaring it should never be changed, but remain in force to the end of the world.

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4. In one sense it may be truly said that Christianity is as old as the creation; for the general principles of right and wrong, the recognition of which, however it may have been reached, constituted our first parent a man in the full sense of the word, are of eternal validity, and were in the mind of the Creator when He made man in His own image. But the view, common in

the eighteenth century, that the state of man before the Fall was one of complete spiritual knowledge and full religious development, cannot now be maintained; still less that he was a conscious party to the so-called Covenant of Works. Matthew Tindal, the Deist, had recently published a work *Christianity as old as the Creation*; possibly there is here an oblique reference to this.

II. 1. 'For verily I say unto you' (a solemn preface, which denotes both the importance and certainty of what is spoken), 'Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.'

'One jot': it is literally, *not one iota*, not the most inconsiderable vowel. 'Or one tittle,' μία κεφαλαία—one *corner* or *point* of a consonant. It is a proverbial expression, which signifies that no one commandment contained in the moral law, nor the least part of any one, however inconsiderable it might seem, should ever be disannulled.

'Shall in no wise pass from the law' οὐ μὴ παρέλθῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου. The double negative, here used, strengthens the sense, so as to admit of no contradiction: and the word παρέλθῃ, it may be observed, is not barely *future*, declaring what *will* be, but has likewise the force of an *imperative*, ordering what *shall* be. It is a word of authority, expressing the sovereign will and power of Him that spake, of Him whose word is the law of heaven and earth, and stands fast for ever and ever.

'One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass, till heaven and earth pass'; or, as it is expressed immediately after, ἕως ἂν πάντα γένηται,—*till all* (or rather *all things*) *be fulfilled*, till the consummation of all things. Here is therefore no room for that poor evasion (with which some have delighted themselves greatly), that 'no part of the law was to pass away, till *all the law* was fulfilled but it has been fulfilled by Christ; and therefore now must pass, for the gospel to be established.' Not so the word *all* does not mean all the law, but all things in the universe; as neither has the term *fulfilled* any reference to the law, but to all things in heaven and earth.

II. 1. It is not correct to say that παρέλθῃ has the force of an imperative; the whole phrase is the strongest form of negation, and should perhaps be explained as shortened from οὐδέος ἐστὶ μὴ παρέλθῃ, there is no fear lest it should pass away. (Cf. the slang Australian denial, 'No fear!') In any case there is no doubt as to the

meaning 'The thing certainly will not happen.'

Some interpreters take the words 'till all be fulfilled' to mean 'till all the law has been fulfilled'; but Wesley's interpretation 'till the consummation of all things' is borne out by the context, and is supported by most of the commentators.

2. From all this we may learn, that there is no contrariety at all between the law and the gospel, that there is no need for the law to pass away, in order to the establishing the gospel. Indeed neither of them supersedes the other, but they agree perfectly well together. Yea, the very same words, considered in different respects, are parts both of the law and of the gospel: if they are considered as commandments, they are parts of the law, if as promises, of the gospel. Thus, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,' when considered as a commandment, is a branch of the law; when regarded as a promise, is an essential part of the gospel—the gospel being no other than the commands of the law, proposed by way of promise. Accordingly, poverty of spirit, purity of heart, and whatever else is enjoined in the holy law of God, are no other, when viewed in a gospel light, than so many great and precious promises.

3. There is, therefore, the closest connexion that can be conceived between the law and the gospel. On the one hand, the law continually makes way for, and points us to, the gospel; on the other, the gospel continually leads us to a more exact fulfilling of the law. The law, for instance, requires us to love God, to love our neighbour, to be meek, humble, or holy—we feel that we are not sufficient for these things; yea, that 'with man this is impossible.' But we see a promise of God, to give us that love, and to make us humble, meek, and holy: we lay hold of this gospel, of these glad tidings: it is done unto us according to our faith, and 'the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us,' through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

We may yet farther observe, that every command in holy writ is only a covered promise. For by that solemn declaration, 'This is the covenant I will make after those days, saith the Lord: I will put My laws in your minds, and write them in your hearts,' God hath engaged to give whatsoever He commands. Does He command us then to 'pray without ceasing,' to 'rejoice evermore,' to be 'holy as He is holy'? It is enough: He will work in us this very thing—it shall be unto us according to His word.

4. But if these things are so, we cannot be at a loss what



to think of those who, in all ages of the Church, have undertaken to change or supersede some commands of God, as they professed, by the peculiar direction of His Spirit. Christ has here given us an infallible rule, whereby to judge of all such pretensions. Christianity, as it includes the whole moral law of God, both by way of injunction and of promise, if we will hear Him, is designed of God to be the last of all His dispensations. There is no other to come after this. This is to endure till the consummation of all things. Of consequence, all such new revelations are of Satan, and not of God; and all pretences to another more perfect dispensation fall to the ground of course. 'Heaven and earth shall pass away'; but *this* word 'shall not pass away.'

III. 1. 'Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be

4. The reference is to those who claimed for themselves a special plenary inspiration and illumination of the Holy Spirit, by which they were set quite above the law. Such were the Catharists or Perfecti of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; the Fraticelli, or Brethren of the Free Spirit, in the Middle Ages; and the Antinomian Mystics in Wesley's own societies.

III. 1. Better 'one of these commandments, even the least ones.' These verses (18 and 19) present considerable difficulty. Our Lord is stating the relation of His teaching to the Old Testament (the law and the prophets). The people might naturally expect that He would abrogate it altogether, and substitute a new code of His own. He therefore puts at the very beginning of His discourse on this point an emphatic declaration of the eternal significance and absolute inviolability of the law, even of its least precepts; and He adopts the language of the Rabbis, who had said over and over

again that the law was immortal; that 'not a letter shall be abolished from the law for ever'; 'that the law perisheth not but abideth in its honour.' It is impossible to suppose, as apparently Wesley does, that He was only referring to the moral law; for no such distinction between the moral and ceremonial law existed in His time. If He did say these words, the people can only have understood Him to mean, 'The minute observance and inculcation of this Old Testament law, in every statute and every detail, is literally and strictly required of every member of the kingdom of heaven.' And yet He Himself, both in practice and teaching, failed to observe some of the commandments and taught men so; as, for example, in relation to divorce, to clean and unclean meats, to Sabbath observance, to the regular fasts. How are we to explain this apparent contradiction? Some commentators would cut the knot by omitting these two verses altogether as an insertion of the evangelist,

called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.'

Who, what are they, that make the preaching of the law a character of reproach? Do they not see on whom the reproach must fall—on whose head it must light at last? Whosoever on this ground despiseth us despiseth Him that sent us. For did ever any man preach the law like Him, even when He came not to condemn but to save the world, when He came purposely to 'bring life and immortality to light through the gospel'? Can any preach the law more expressly, more rigorously, than Christ does in these words? And who is he that shall amend them? Who is he that shall instruct the Son of God how to preach? Who will teach

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intended to conciliate the Jews, for whom especially this Gospel was intended. Others hold that all that our Lord meant was that even the smallest command in the law had a spiritual significance, and that this would never pass away, though the command itself might cease to be observed. But this is not what He says, nor could His hearers have so understood Him at the time. My own conviction is that Jesus both said these words and meant them literally; He had no desire at the outset of His ministry to break with the Jewish Church, or to encourage those who had been brought up in it to neglect any of its precepts, ceremonial or moral. He stood, not as the destroyer, but as the fulfiller of the law. It is true that the issue of His teaching was the abrogation of the Mosaic law to make room for the law of the Spirit of Life; but the time for that was not yet. The only law that He does abrogate in the course of this sermon is that on divorce; and I believe that verses 31 and 32 have been added to the sermon by the evangelist from a later

saying of our Lord's. All the other laws He reaffirms with an added strictness of spiritual interpretation. There is no real inconsistency in this gradual change of attitude. Every wise reformer does his best to avoid making a breach with the old before he has established the new. That our Lord began His public ministry by attacking Judaism I do not believe; He rather claimed for Himself and His followers that they should be stricter than the Pharisees themselves. But gradually, and as they could bear it, He unfolded to His disciples the implications of His teaching, and so prepared them for the freedom of the gospel, which was not realized by the Jewish Christians for many years after the foundation of the Church, and was only grudgingly granted to the Gentile converts. One may instructively compare Wesley's own gradually changing attitude with regard to the Church of England; or on a wider scale, the history of the attitude of the Church towards slavery, war, and the emancipation of woman.

Him a better way of delivering the message which He hath received of the Father ?

2. 'Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments,' or one of the least of these commandments. 'These commandments,' we may observe, is a term used by our Lord as an equivalent with the law, or the law and the prophets,—which is the same thing, seeing the prophets added nothing to the law, but only declared, explained, or enforced it, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

'Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments,' especially if it be done wilfully or presumptuously ;—*one*—for 'he that keepeth the whole law, and' thus 'offends in one point, is guilty of all', the wrath of God abideth on him, as surely as if he had broken every one. So that no allowance is made for one darling lust, no reserve for one idol ; no excuse for refraining from all besides, and only giving way to one bosom sin. What God demands is, an entire obedience ; we are to have an eye to all His commandments, otherwise we lose all the labour we take in keeping some, and our poor souls for ever and ever.

'One of these least,' or one of the least of these commandments : here is another excuse cut off, whereby many, who cannot deceive God, miserably deceive their own souls. 'This sin,' saith the sinner, 'is it not a little one ? Will not the Lord spare me in this thing ? Surely He will not be extreme to mark this, since I do not offend in the greater matters of the law.' Vain hope ! Speaking after the manner of men, we may term these great, and those little, commandments ; but, in reality they are not so. If we use propriety of speech, there is no such thing as a little sin ; every sin being a transgression of the holy and perfect law, and an affront on the great Majesty of heaven.

3. 'And shall teach men so.' In some sense it may be said, that whosoever openly breaks any commandment teaches others to do the same ; for example speaks, and many times louder than precept. In this sense, it is apparent, every open drunkard is a teacher of drunkenness, every Sabbath-breaker is constantly teaching his neighbour to profane the day of the

Lord. But this is not all : an habitual breaker of the law is seldom content to stop here ; he generally teaches other men to do so too, by word as well as example , especially when he hardens his neck, and hateth to be reproved. Such a sinner soon commences an advocate for sin ; he defends what he is resolved not to forsake ; he excuses the sin which he will not leave, and thus directly teaches every sin which he commits.

‘ He shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven ’—that is, shall have no part therein. He is a stranger to the kingdom of heaven which is on earth : he hath no portion in that inheritance ; no share of that ‘ righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.’ Nor, by consequence, can he have any part in the glory which shall be revealed.

4. But if those who even thus break, and teach others to break, ‘ one of the least of these commandments, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven,’ shall have no part in the kingdom of Christ and of God ; if even these shall be cast into ‘ outer darkness, where is wailing and gnashing of teeth ’ ; then where will they appear, whom our Lord chiefly and primarily intends in these words—they who, bearing the character of teachers sent from God, do nevertheless themselves break His commandments , yea, and openly teach others so to do , being corrupt both in life and doctrine ?

5. These are of several sorts. Of the first sort are they who live in some wilful, habitual sin. Now, if an ordinary sinner teaches by his example, how much more a sinful minister—even if he does not attempt to defend, excuse, or extenuate his sin ! If he does, he is a murderer indeed , yea, the murderer-general of his congregation. He peoples the regions of death. He is the choicest instrument of the prince of darkness. When he goes hence, ‘ hell from beneath is moved to meet him at his coming.’ Nor can he sink into the bottomless pit, without dragging a multitude after him.

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3. ‘ Commences.’ Wesley uses the word in its University sense, to graduate ; the sinner soon takes his full degree as an advocate for sin.

‘ Shall have no part therein.’ There is no need to exaggerate what

our Lord says ; He means, ‘ So far from the breaker of old tradition and observance being a leader and chief in the coming kingdom of heaven, he will be of low rank and importance.’

6. Next to these are the good-natured, good sort of men ; who live an easy, harmless life, neither troubling themselves with outward sin, nor with inward holiness ; men who are remarkable neither one way nor the other, neither for religion nor irreligion ; who are very regular both in public and private, but do not pretend to be any stricter than their neighbours. A minister of this kind breaks, not one, or a few only, of the least commandments of God : but all the great and weighty branches of His law which relate to the power of godliness, and all that require us to 'pass the time of our sojourning in fear,' to 'work out our salvation with fear and trembling,' to have our 'loins always girt, and our lights burning,' to 'strive' or agonize 'to enter in at the strait gate.' And he *teaches men so*, by the whole form of his life, and the general tenor of his preaching, which uniformly tends to soothe those in their pleasing dream who imagine themselves Christians and are not ; to persuade all who attend upon his ministry to sleep on and take their rest. No marvel, therefore, if both he, and they that follow him, wake together in everlasting burnings !

7. But above all these, in the highest rank of the enemies of the gospel of Christ are they who openly and explicitly 'judge the law' itself, and 'speak evil of the law', who teach men to break (*λύσαι*, to *dissolve*, to *loose*, to *untie*, the obligation of) not one only, whether of the least or of the greatest, but all the commandments at a stroke, who teach, without any cover, in so many words, 'What did our Lord do with the law ? He abolished it. There is but one duty, which is that of believing. All commands are unfit for our

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7. So in *Minutes*, 1744, Wesley states the first main pillar of Antinomianism to be 'that Christ abolished the moral law'; and later on he asks, 'What law has Christ abolished?' and answers, 'The ritual law of Moses.' But in Sermon XXIX, on The Original of the Law, the first three sections show a great advance in his view on this

subject. He says: 'Now we are delivered from the law; from that whole moral as well as ceremonial economy; that entire institution being now as it were dead, and having no more authority over us than the husband, when dead, hath over his wife.' And again, iv. 4: 'Every believer has done with the law, as it means the Jewish ceremonial law,

times. From any demand of the law, no man is obliged now to go one step, or give away one farthing, to eat or omit one morsel.' This is, indeed, carrying matters with a high hand; this is withstanding our Lord to the face, and telling Him that He understood not how to deliver the message on which He was sent. O Lord, lay not this sin to their charge! Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!

8. The most surprising of all the circumstances that attend this strong delusion is, that they who are given up to it really believe that they honour Christ by overthrowing His law, and that they are magnifying His office, while they are destroying His doctrine. Yea, they honour Him just as Judas did, when he said, 'Hail, Master!' and kissed Him. And He may as justly say to every one of them, 'Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?' It is no other than betraying Him with a kiss, to talk of His blood, and take away His crown, to set light by any part of His law, under pretence of advancing His gospel. Nor, indeed, can any one escape this charge, who preaches faith in any such a manner as either directly or indirectly tends to set aside any branch of obedience, who preaches Christ so as to disannul, or weaken in any wise, the least of the commandments of God.

9. It is impossible, indeed, to have too high an esteem for 'the faith of God's elect.' And we must all declare, 'By grace ye are saved through faith, not of works, lest any man should boast.' We must cry aloud to every penitent sinner, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' But, at the same time, we must take care to let all men know, we esteem no faith but that which worketh by love, and that we are not saved by faith, unless so far as we are delivered

or the entire Mosaic dispensation; for these Christ hath taken out of the way.' St. Paul himself recognized how narrow a line separated this profound doctrine from vulgar Antinomianism; and it was the Antinomian preaching of James Wheatley—who, with his 'unconnected rhapsody of unmeaning words,'

became, 'to the utter reproach of the Methodist congregations,' a most popular preacher—David Trathen, Thomas Webb, Robert Swindells, John Maddern, and others, who called themselves 'gospel preachers,' that provoked this vigorous outburst from Wesley.

from the power as well as the guilt of sin. And when we say, 'Believe, and thou shalt be saved,' we do not mean, 'Believe, and thou shalt step from sin to heaven, without any holiness coming between, faith supplying the place of holiness'; but, 'Believe, and thou shalt be holy; believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt have peace and power together thou shalt have power from Him in whom thou believest, to trample sin under thy feet; power to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and to serve Him with all thy strength; thou shalt have power, "by patient continuance in well-doing, to seek for glory, and honour, and immortality", thou shalt both do and teach all the commandments of God, from the least even to the greatest: thou shalt teach them by thy life as well as thy words, and so "be called great in the kingdom of heaven."'

IV 1. Whatever other way we teach to the kingdom of heaven, to glory, honour, and immortality, be it called 'the way of faith,' or by any other name, it is, in truth, the way to destruction. It will not bring a man peace at the last. For thus saith the Lord, 'I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.'

The Scribes, mentioned so often in the New Testament, as some of the most constant and vehement opposers of our Lord, were not secretaries, or men employed in writing only, as that term might incline us to believe. Neither were they lawyers, in our common sense of the word; although the word *νομικοί* is so rendered in our translation. Their employment had no affinity at all to that of a lawyer among us. They were conversant with the laws of God, and not with the laws of man. These were their study it was their proper and

IV. 1. The Scribes were the official students, teachers, and administrators of the law. They became an organized body during the Persian period (circ. 400-300 B.C.). From the time of the Maccabees onward they became more and more closely

associated with the Pharisees, and are usually mentioned in conjunction with them in the Gospels; though there were also Scribes of the Sadducees. They were addressed as Rabbi, and were held in the greatest honour by their pupils.

peculiar business to read and expound the law and the prophets ; particularly in the synagogues. They were the ordinary, stated preachers among the Jews. So that if the sense of the original word was attended to, we might render it, ' the divines.' For these were the men who made divinity their profession and they were generally (as their name literally imports) men of letters, men of the greatest account for learning that were then in the Jewish nation.

2. The Pharisees were a very ancient sect, or body of men, among the Jews ; originally so called from the Hebrew word פָּרִישׁ, which signifies to *separate* or *divide*. Not that they made any formal separation from, or division in, the national Church they were only distinguished from others by greater strictness of life, by more exactness of conversation. For they were zealous of the law in the minutest points, paying tithes of mint, anise, and cummin : and hence they were had in honour of all the people, and generally esteemed the holiest of men.

Many of the Scribes were of the sect of the Pharisees.

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2. The Pharisees were not ' a very ancient sect among the Jews ' ; they first appear as an influential party in the reign of John Hyrcanus (135-105 B.C.). They were, in contradistinction to the Sadducees, the upholders of the oral tradition as against the written law of the Pentateuch ; they were the champions of the people against the aristocratic pretensions of their rivals ; they strove to bring religious observance into the life of the whole community ; and they were carefully attentive to ritual, not so much for its own sake as for its educational and symbolic value. Their most characteristic watchword was ' Penitence, prayer, and charity [i.e. almsgiving] avert the evil doom.' Their aims were noble, but the legalistic form of their religion inevitably led to formalism, externalism, and, ultimately, unreality

and hypocrisy. In this passage our Lord speaks of them as the recognized exemplars of the highest religious life ; He does not blame them, but on the contrary declares that, high as their ideal is, the ideal for members of the kingdom of heaven must be higher still. During the later part of His life He came into conflict with the Pharisees, probably with those who followed the stricter school of Shammai, and denounced their practices with nervous vigour ; but at this early stage He speaks of them only with respect for their piety, and as examples, which must, however, be not only followed but bettered by His own disciples.

The origin of the name is uncertain ; most authorities derive it as Wesley does, but think it meant at first ' the seceders,' i.e. from the party of the Sadducees. It was



Thus St. Paul himself, who was educated for a Scribe, first at the university of Tarsus, and after that in Jerusalem, at the feet of Gamaliel (one of the most learned Scribes or Doctors of the Law that were then in the nation), declares of himself before the council, 'I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee' (Acts xxiii. 6), and before King Agrippa, 'After the straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee' (xxvi. 5). And the whole body of the Scribes generally esteemed and acted in concert with the Pharisees. Hence we find our Saviour so frequently coupling them together, as coming in many respects under the same consideration. In this place they seem to be mentioned together as the most eminent professors of religion; the former of whom were accounted the wisest, the latter the holiest of men.

3. What 'the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees' really was, it is not difficult to determine. Our Lord has preserved an authentic account which one of them gave of himself: and he is clear and full in describing his own righteousness, and cannot be supposed to have omitted any part of it. He went up indeed 'into the temple to pray'; but was so intent upon his own virtues, that he forgot the design upon which he came. For it is remarkable, he does not properly pray at all—he only tells God how wise and good he was. 'God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers; or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' His righteousness therefore consisted of three parts—first, saith he, 'I am not as other men are'; I am not an extortioner, not unjust, not an adulterer; not 'even as this publican': secondly, 'I fast twice in the week': and, thirdly, 'I give tithes of all that I possess.'

'I am not as other men are.' This is not a small point. It is not every man that can say this. It is as if he had said,

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very likely, like 'Christian' and 'Methodist,' a nickname to begin with.

On Paul's education, see note on Sermon XI, 14.

3. The introduction of this parable is very pertinent. Wesley often records the preaching of a sermon on the Pharisee and the Publican.

'I do not suffer myself to be carried away by that great torrent, custom. I live not by custom, but by reason; not by the examples of men, but by the Word of God. I am not an extortioner, not unjust, not an adulterer, however common these sins are, even among those who are called the people of God (extortion, in particular—a kind of legal injustice, not punishable by any human law, the making gain of another's ignorance or necessity—having filled every corner of the land); nor even as this publican; not guilty of any open or presumptuous sin; not an outward sinner, but a fair, honest man, of blameless life and conversation.'

4. 'I fast twice in the week.' There is more implied in this than we may at first be sensible of. All the stricter Pharisees observed the weekly fasts; namely, every Monday and Thursday. On the former day, they fasted in memory of Moses receiving on that day (as their tradition taught) the two tables of stone written by the finger of God; on the latter, in memory of his casting them out of his hand, when he saw the people dancing round the golden calf. On these days, they took no sustenance at all, till three in the afternoon; the hour at which they began to offer up the evening sacrifice in the temple. Till that hour, it was their custom to remain in the temple, in some of the corners, apartments, or courts thereof; that they might be ready to assist at all the sacrifices, and to join in all the public prayers. The time between they were accustomed to employ, partly in private addresses to God, partly in searching the Scriptures, in reading the law and the prophets, and in meditating thereon. Thus much is implied in, 'I fast twice in the week', the second branch of the righteousness of a Pharisee.

5. 'I give tithes of all that I possess.' This the Pharisees did with the utmost exactness. They would not except the

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4. See Sermon XXII, i. 6. The only fast prescribed in the law was that on the Day of Atonement. The bi-weekly fasts were not obligatory, and were not observed by all the Pharisees; but the stricter members of the party bound themselves

voluntarily to keep the Monday and Thursday fasts during the whole year.

5. The Pentateuchal system ordained (1) a tithe of all edible vegetable products every year for the priests and Levites—this in our

most inconsiderable thing ; no, not mint, anise, and cummin. They would not keep back the least part of what they believed properly to belong to God ; but gave a full tenth of their whole substance yearly, and of all their increase, whatsoever it was.

Yea, the stricter Pharisees (as has been often observed by those who are versed in the ancient Jewish writings), not content with giving one tenth of their substance to God in His priests and Levites, gave another tenth to God in the poor, and that continually. They gave the same proportion of all they had in alms, as they were accustomed to give in tithes. And this likewise they adjusted with the utmost exactness ; that they might not keep back any part, but might fully render unto God the things which were God's, as they accounted this to be. So that, upon the whole, they gave away, from year to year, an entire fifth of all that they possessed.

6. This was ' the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees ' , a righteousness which, in many respects, went far beyond the conception which many have been accustomed to entertain concerning it. But perhaps it will be said, ' It was all false and feigned ; for they were all a company of hypocrites.' Some of them doubtless were ; men who had really no religion at all, no fear of God, or desire to please Him , who had no concern for the honour that cometh of God, but only for the praise of men. And these are they whom our Lord so severely condemns, so sharply reproves, on many occasions. But we must not suppose, because many Pharisees were hypocrites,

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Lord's time was entirely appropriated by the priests ; (2) a second tithe of vegetable products and cattle which furnished a feast for the owner and his guests at Jerusalem (Deut. xiv. 22) ; (3) the first tithe was given every third year to the poor, but in our Lord's time this was a third tithe in addition to the first, and was paid twice in every seven years. Wesley is wrong in saying that the tithe was paid on the ' whole substance,' or, as he puts

it in section 9, ' both of the principal and of the increase.' The Greek of the passage has been translated incorrectly, from the Vulgate onwards until the R.V., ' I give tithes of all that I possess ' ; *Vg.* ' quae habeo,' Luther ' das ich habe.' The R.V. has it rightly ' of all that I get.'

6. These remarks are very just. The idea that the Pharisees were all hypocrites, or consciously acting a part, is quite incorrect. Some of

therefore all were so. Nor indeed is hypocrisy by any means essential to the character of a Pharisee. This is not the distinguishing mark of their sect. It is rather this, according to our Lord's account, 'They trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.' This is their genuine badge. But the Pharisee of this kind cannot be an hypocrite. He must be, in the common sense, sincere, otherwise he could not 'trust in himself that he is righteous.' The man who was here commending himself to God, unquestionably thought himself righteous. Consequently he was no hypocrite, he was not conscious to himself of any insincerity. He now spoke to God just what he thought, that he was abundantly better than other men.

But the example of St. Paul, were there no other, is sufficient to put this out of all question. He could not only say when he was a Christian, 'Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men' (Acts xxiv 16), but even concerning the time when he was a Pharisee, 'Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day' (xxiii. 1). He was therefore sincere when he was a Pharisee, as well as when he was a Christian. He was no more a hypocrite when he persecuted the church, than when he preached the faith which once he persecuted. Let this then be added to 'the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees'—a sincere belief that they are righteous, and in all things 'doing God service.'

7. And yet, 'except your righteousness,' saith our Lord, 'shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.' A solemn and weighty declaration, and one which it behoves all who are called by the name of Christ seriously and deeply to consider. But before we inquire how our righteousness may

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them doubtless were so, and the tendency of a legal and formal religion is in that direction; but in any case, that is not the point here. Their fundamental error was that

they thought that God could be satisfied by a series of outward observances, and that by strictness in these they could acquire merit.

exceed theirs, let us examine whether at present we come up to it.

First. A Pharisee was 'not as other men are.' In externals he was singularly good. Are we so? Do we dare to be singular at all? Do we not rather swim with the stream? Do we not many times dispense with religion and reason together, because we would not *look particular*? Are we not often more afraid of being out of the fashion, than being out of the way of salvation? Have we courage to stem the tide, to run counter to the world, 'to obey God rather than man'? Otherwise, the Pharisee leaves us behind at the very first step. It is well if we overtake him any more.

But to come closer. Can we use his first plea with God?—which is, in substance, 'I do no harm: I live in no outward sin: I do nothing for which my own heart condemns me.' Do you not? Are you sure of that? Do you live in no practice for which your own heart condemns you? If you are not an adulterer, if you are not unchaste, either in word or deed, are you not unjust? The grand measure of justice, as well as of mercy, is, 'Do unto others as thou wouldest they should do unto thee.' Do you walk by this rule? Do you never do unto any what you would not they should do unto you? Nay, are you not grossly unjust? Are you not an extortioner? Do you not make a gain of any one's ignorance or necessity; neither in buying nor selling? Suppose you were engaged in trade: do you demand, do you receive, no more than the real value of what you sell? Do you demand, do you receive, no more of the ignorant than of the knowing—of a little child, than of an experienced trader? If you

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7. 'Particular'; i.e. strange, odd, singular.

In the Rules for the United Societies members are forbidden 'the using many words in buying and selling' (1743); and the members of the Bands are directed 'to be at a word both in buying and selling.' In the *Large Minutes* (1770), Q. 17, Wesley asks, 'What servants, jour-

neymen, labourers, carpenters, bricklayers, do as they would be done by? Which of them does as much work as he can? Set him down for a knave that does not. Who does as he would be done by, in buying and selling, particularly in selling horses? Write him knave that does not. And the Methodist knave is the worst of all knaves.'

do, why does not your heart condemn you? You are a bare-faced extortioner. Do you demand no more than the usual price of goods of any who is in pressing want—who must have, and that without delay, the things which you only can furnish him with? If you do, this also is flat extortion. Indeed you do not come up to the righteousness of a Pharisee.

8. A Pharisee, secondly (to express his sense in our common way), used all the means of grace. As he fasted often and much, twice in every week, so he attended all the sacrifices. He was constant in public and private prayer, and in reading and hearing the Scriptures. Do you go as far as this? Do you fast much and often?—twice in the week? I fear not. Once at least—‘on all Fridays in the year’? (So our Church clearly and peremptorily enjoins all her members to do, to observe all these, as well as the vigils and the forty days of Lent, as days of fasting or abstinence.) Do you fast twice in the year? I am afraid some among us cannot plead even this! Do you neglect no opportunity of attending and partaking of the Christian sacrifice? How many are they who call themselves Christians, and yet are utterly regardless of it—yet do not eat of that bread, or drink of that cup, for months, perhaps years together! Do you, every day, either hear the Scriptures, or read them, and meditate thereon? Do you join in prayer with the great congregation, daily, if you have opportunity; if not, whenever you can; particularly on that

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8. The fast-days of the Church of England are set out in the Table of Fasts in the Prayer-Book. See intro. to Sermon XXII.

‘The Christian sacrifice’; the Lord’s Supper. So in Sermon CI, i. 4, Wesley says that amongst the first Christians ‘the Christian sacrifice was a constant part of the Lord’s-day service.’ The phrase is justified by long usage in the Church, but it must not be taken as implying any belief that in the Lord’s Supper the communion-table is an altar upon which the priest offers up the

body and blood of our Lord as a sacrifice for sins. Dr. Gore (*Body of Christ*, p. 171) expresses the present faith of the Church of England on this subject. The Eucharist is, he says, a sacrificial offering of praise and thanksgiving, of prayer in the name of Christ, of alms for the poor, and of the Church herself, ‘as a glad instrument of the purpose and kingdom of God.’ But, he adds, ‘It does not effect any renewal of the sacrifice of the cross.’ In the Communion Service it is called ‘this our sacrifice of praise and thanks-

day which you 'remember to keep it holy'? Do you strive to *make* opportunities? Are you glad when they say unto you, 'We will go into the house of the Lord'? Are you zealous of, and diligent in, private prayer? Do you suffer no day to pass without it? Rather, are not some of you so far from spending therein (with the Pharisee) several hours in one day, that you think one hour full enough, if not too much? Do you spend an hour in a day, or in a week, in praying to your Father which is in secret? yea, an hour in a month? Have you spent one hour together in private prayer ever since you was born? Ah, poor Christian! Shall not the Pharisee rise up in the judgement against thee and condemn thee? His righteousness is as far above thine as the heaven is above the earth!

9. The Pharisee, thirdly, paid tithes and gave alms of all that he possessed. And in how ample a manner! So that he was (as we phrase it) 'a man that did much good.' Do we come up to him here? Which of us is so abundant as he was in good works? Which of us gives a fifth of all his substance to God, both of the principal and of the increase? Who of us, out of (suppose) an hundred pounds a year, gives twenty to God and the poor, out of fifty, ten; and so in a larger or a smaller proportion? When shall our righteousness, in using all the means of grace, in attending all the ordinances of God, in avoiding evil and doing good, equal at least the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees?

giving'; and following on this, the communicants say, 'Here we offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Thee.' Indeed, it has been judicially decided that the word 'altar' cannot be legally used of the communion-table in the Church of England. In view of the determined efforts that are being made by some of the High-Church party to romanize the Lord's Supper into a Mass, with all the Romish implica-

tions of transubstantiation, and the actual offering up of the body and blood of Christ in this sacrament, it is well to avoid any terms that may seem to look in that direction, such as priest, altar, and sacrifice. Wesley, in his *Roman Catechism* (1756), Q. 68, altogether repudiates the doctrine that 'in the sacrifice of the Mass, the same Christ is contained, and unbloodyly offered, who bloodily offered Himself upon the altar of the cross.'

9. See note on section 5 above.

10. Although if it only equalled theirs, what would that profit ? ' For verily I say unto you, Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.' But how can it exceed theirs ? Wherein does the righteousness of a Christian exceed that of a Scribe or Pharisee ? Christian righteousness exceeds theirs, first, in the extent of it. Most of the Pharisees, though they were rigorously exact in many things, yet were emboldened, by the traditions of the elders, to dispense with others of equal importance. Thus, they were extremely punctual in keeping the fourth commandment—they would not even rub an ear of corn on the Sabbath day, but not at all in keeping the third—making little account of light, or even false, swearing. So that their righteousness was partial, whereas the righteousness of a real Christian is universal. He does not observe one, or some parts of the law of God, and neglect the rest, but keeps all His commandments, loves them all, values them above gold or precious stones.

11. It may be, indeed, that some of the Scribes and Pharisees endeavoured to keep all the commandments, and consequently were, as touching the righteousness of the law, that is, according to the letter of it, blameless. But still the righteousness of a Christian exceeds all this righteousness of a Scribe or Pharisee, by fulfilling the spirit as well as the letter of the law, by inward as well as outward obedience. In this, in the spirituality of it, it admits of no comparison. This is the point which our Lord has so largely proved, in the whole tenor of this discourse. Their righteousness was external only ; Christian righteousness is in the inner man. The Pharisee ' cleansed the outside of the cup and the platter ' ; the Christian is clean within. The Pharisee laboured to present God with a good life ; the Christian with a holy heart. The one shook off the leaves, perhaps the fruits, of sin, the other ' lays the axe to the root ' ; as not being content with the outward form of godliness, how exact soever it be, unless the life, the Spirit, the power of God unto salvation be felt in the inmost soul.



Thus, to do no harm, to do good, to attend the ordinances of God (the righteousness of a Pharisee), are all external; whereas, on the contrary, poverty of spirit, mourning, meekness, hunger and thirst after righteousness, the love of our neighbour, and purity of heart (the righteousness of a Christian), are all internal. And even peace-making (or doing good), and suffering for righteousness' sake, stand entitled to the blessings annexed to them, only as they imply these inward dispositions, as they spring from, exercise, and confirm them. So that whereas the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees was external only, it may be said, in some sense, that the righteousness of a Christian is internal only: all his actions and sufferings being as nothing in themselves, being estimated before God only by the tempers from which they spring.

12. Whosoever therefore thou art, who bearest the holy and venerable name of a Christian, see, first, that thy righteousness fall not short of the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. Be not thou 'as other men are'! 'Dare to stand alone'; to be, 'against example, singularly good.' If thou 'follow a multitude' at all, it must be 'to do evil.' Let not custom or fashion be thy guide, but reason and religion. The practice of others is nothing to thee: 'Every man must give an account of himself to God.' Indeed, if thou canst save the soul of another, do, but at least save one,—thy own. Walk not in the path of death because it is broad, and many walk therein. Nay, by this very token thou mayest know it. Is the way wherein thou now walkest, a broad, well-frequented, fashionable way? Then it infallibly leads to destruction. O be not thou 'damned for company'! Cease from evil fly

12. 'Against example singularly good.' Milton, *Paradise Regained*, iii. 57, says that to be dispraised by the vulgar is 'his lot who dares be singularly good.' Cf. the character of Abdiel in *Paradise Lost*, v. 896, &c.

Nor number nor example with him wrought  
To swerve from truth, or change his constant  
mind  
Though single.

'Damned for company.' So in

Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, Pt. I, i. 2. 108, Falstaff declares, 'I must give over this life. I'll be damned for never a king's son in Christendom.'

'The mammon of unrighteousness'; i.e. worldly wealth. The word is of Syriac origin. The meaning of the passage is 'In your own interest make friends by means of your wealth,' i.e. by giving to the poor.

from sin as from the face of a serpent ! At least, do no harm. 'He that committeth sin is of the devil.' Be not thou found in that number. Touching outward sins, surely the grace of God is even now sufficient for thee. 'Herein,' at least, 'exercise thyself to have a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.'

Secondly. Let not thy righteousness fall short of theirs with regard to the ordinances of God. If thy labour or bodily strength will not allow of thy fasting twice in the week, however, deal faithfully with thy own soul, and fast as often as thy strength will permit. Omit no public, no private opportunity of pouring out thy soul in prayer. Neglect no occasion of eating that bread and drinking that cup which is the communion of the body and blood of Christ. Be diligent in searching the Scriptures, read as thou mayest, and meditate therein day and night. Rejoice to embrace every opportunity of hearing 'the word of reconciliation' declared by the 'ambassadors of Christ,' the 'stewards of the mysteries of God.' In using all the means of grace, in a constant and careful attendance on every ordinance of God, live up to (at least till thou canst go beyond) 'the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.'

Thirdly. Fall not short of a Pharisee in doing good. Give alms of all thou dost possess. Is any hungry ? Feed him. Is he athirst ? Give him drink. Naked ? Cover him with a garment. If thou hast this world's goods, do not limit thy beneficence to a scanty proportion. Be merciful to the uttermost of thy power. Why not even as this Pharisee ? Now 'make thyself friends,' while the time is, 'of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when thou failest,' when this earthly tabernacle is dissolved, they 'may receive thee into everlasting habitations.'

13. But rest not here. Let thy righteousness 'exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.' Be not thou content to 'keep the whole law, and offend in one point.' Hold thou fast all His commandments, and all 'false ways do thou utterly abhor.' Do all the things whatsoever He hath commanded, and that with all thy might. Thou canst do all

things through Christ strengthening thee ; though without Him thou canst do nothing.

Above all, let thy righteousness exceed theirs in the purity and spirituality of it. What is the exactest form of religion to thee ? the most perfect outside righteousness ? Go thou higher and deeper than all this ! Let thy religion be the religion of the heart. Be thou poor in spirit ; little, and base, and mean, and vile in thy own eyes ; amazed and humbled to the dust at the love of God which is in Christ Jesus thy Lord ! Be serious : let the whole stream of thy thoughts, words, and works be such as flows from the deepest conviction that thou standest on the edge of the great gulf, thou and all the children of men, just ready to drop in, either into everlasting glory or everlasting burnings ! Be meek : let thy soul be filled with mildness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering toward all men ; at the same time that all which is in thee is athirst for God, the living God, longing to awake up after His likeness, and to be satisfied with it. Be thou a lover of God, and of all mankind. In this spirit, do and suffer all things. Thus 'exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees,' and thou shalt be 'called great in the kingdom of heaven.'

SERMON XXI  
UPON OUR LORD'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT  
DISCOURSE VI

THE substance of this sermon was no doubt part of the systematic expositions of the Sermon on the Mount to the Societies. The only reference to it as a distinct discourse is in the sermon-register for Monday, December 24, 1750, when it was preached in the morning at the Foundery, the text being Matt. vi. 13, &c.

The three chief duties of the Jewish religion were almsgiving, prayer, and fasting. These our Lord assumes are practised by His hearers, and He does not prescribe them, but gives directions for their acceptable performance.

The practice of almsgiving, whilst encouraged in the Old Testament, became specially prominent in the third and second centuries B.C. Tobit gives advice to Tobias (Tob. xii. 8), 'Prayer is good with fasting and alms and righteousness. It is better to give alms than to lay up gold. For alms doth deliver from death, and shall purge away all sin.' So the Son of Sirach (Ecclus. iii. 30) says, 'Alms maketh an atonement for sin.' In process of time the alms were given through the synagogue, by the officers of which the relief of the poor was organized. One of the Mishpotim in the Midrash Tanchumah runs, 'God, whose creditor you have become when you helped the helpless, will rescue you and yours from danger when it is near.' The modern Jews have maintained their nation's character in this respect, and it used to be, and probably still is, a rare thing to find a Jew in a work-house in England.

Prayer is not a matter for legislation, and no directions for this exercise are given in the law. The essence of prayer is its spontaneity ; it is the cry of a soul at the point of destruction—'Lord, save, or I perish!'—or the exchange of intimate confidences between the child and his Father in heaven. To order prayer to be offered is to make it impossible. So the law left it alone ; but the whole of the Old Testament smokes with the incense of the prayers of the saints, and the Book of Psalms is the model of all devotion. By the end of the first century B.C. prayers had been regularized by the Rabbis, and

three hours of prayer were prescribed—the third, the sixth, and the ninth hours; or, as Schürer thinks, the hours of the morning and evening sacrifice, and sunset. The synagogues were always open for the offering of prayer, and it was usual to go thither at each hour of prayer for that purpose; but if the hour of prayer overtook a man in his home or in the street, he would offer his prayer there. This led in many cases to ostentatious praying in the most public places possible, in order to gain credit with the crowd. Hence our Lord's criticism.

It should be noted that in verse 1 the better reading is, 'Take heed that ye do not your *righteousness* before men.' Righteousness includes the three branches cited as illustrations of the general proposition—almsgiving, prayer, and fasting. In each case the sin denounced is ostentation; the verses 7 to 15 interrupt the continuity of the sermon, and are an editorial insertion of the evangelist. The warning against 'vain repetitions' is directed not against Pharisaic but heathen prayers, and does not properly belong here. St. Luke (xi. 1-4) gives us the Lord's Prayer in its chronological place, and states the occasion on which it was dictated to the disciples; but St. Matthew's version seems to be the original one, Luke having omitted certain clauses which would not be understood by the Gentile readers for whom he was writing. Thus 'which art in heaven' is a well-known Jewish qualification of God; the reference to the angels in the third petition would have no meaning to the Gentiles; 'sins' is a more familiar word than the Jewish 'debts'; and the second part of the sixth petition may imply the Jewish belief in a personal Devil, 'Deliver us from the Evil One.' The Doxology is an early liturgical addition to the prayer, and not a part of it as delivered by our Lord. The two verses which follow occur in another connexion in Mark xi. 25, and practically in Matt. xviii. 35.

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*Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them : otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.*

*Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth :*

*That thine alms may be in secret : and thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly.*

*And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are : for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*

*But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*

*But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the Heathen do : for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.*

*Be not ye therefore like unto them : for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him.*

*After this manner therefore pray ye : Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil : For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.*

*For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you :*

*But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.—MATT. vi. 1-15.*

1. IN the preceding chapter our Lord has described inward religion in its various branches. He has laid before us those dispositions of soul which constitute real Christianity, the inward tempers contained in that 'holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord'; the affections which, when flowing from their proper fountain, from a living faith in God through Christ Jesus, are intrinsically and essentially good, and acceptable to God. He proceeds to show, in this chapter, how all our actions likewise, even those that are indifferent in their own nature, may be made holy, and good, and acceptable to God, by a pure and holy intention. Whatever is done without this, He largely declares, is of no value before God. Whereas, whatever outward works are thus consecrated to God, they are, in His sight, of great price.

2. The necessity of this purity of intention, He shows, first, with regard to those which are usually accounted religious actions, and indeed are such when performed with a right intention. Some of these are commonly termed 'works of piety', the rest, 'works of charity' or mercy. Of the latter sort, He particularly names almsgiving; of the former, prayer and fasting. But the directions given for these are equally to be applied to every work, whether of charity or mercy.

I. 1. And, first, with regard to works of mercy. 'Take heed,' saith He, 'that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.' 'That ye do not your alms': although this only is named, yet is every work of charity included, everything which we give, or speak, or do, whereby our neighbour may be profited, whereby another man may receive any advantage, either in his body or soul. The feeding the hungry, the clothing the naked, the entertaining or assisting the stranger, the visiting those that are sick or in prison, the comforting the afflicted, the instructing the ignorant, the reproving the wicked, the exhorting and encouraging the well-doer, and if there be any other work of mercy, it is equally included in this direction.

2. 'Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them.' The thing which is here forbidden is not barely the doing good in the sight of men, this circumstance alone, that others see what we do, makes the action neither worse nor better, but the doing it before men, 'to be seen of them,' with this view, from this intention only. I say, from this intention only; for this may, in some cases, be a part of our intention, we may design that some of our actions should be seen, and yet they may be acceptable to God. We may intend that our light should shine before men, when our conscience bears us witness in the Holy Ghost, that our ultimate end in designing they should see our good works is, 'that they may glorify our Father which is in heaven.' But take heed that ye do not the least thing with a view to your own glory take heed that a regard to the praise of men have no place at all in your works of mercy. If ye seek your own glory, if you have any design to gain the honour that cometh of men, whatever is done with this view is nothing worth; it is not done unto the Lord: He accepteth it not; 'ye have no reward' for this 'of your Father which is in heaven.'

3. 'Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues

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I. par. 3. The word 'synagogue' New Testament and other contemporary literature than the place of

and in the streets, that they may have praise of men.' The word synagogue does not here mean a place of worship, but any place of public resort, such as the market-place, or exchange. It was a common thing among the Jews who were men of large fortunes, particularly among the Pharisees, to cause a trumpet to be sounded before them in the most public parts of the city, when they were about to give any considerable alms. The pretended reason for this was to call the poor together to receive it, but the real design, that they might have praise of men. But be not thou like unto them. Do not thou cause a trumpet to be sounded before thee. Use no ostentation in doing good. Aim at the honour which cometh of God only. They who seek the praise of men have their reward they shall have no praise of God.

4. 'But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.' This is a proverbial expression, the meaning of which is, Do it in as secret a manner as is possible; as secret as is consistent with the doing it at all (for it must not be left undone, omit no opportunity of doing

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worship. There was a synagogue in every village in Palestine, which was used both for worship and for teaching. It was entered from the east end, and at the opposite end there was a chest or cupboard in which the scrolls of the Scriptures were preserved, and a bema or rostrum from which the prayers and addresses were delivered. The alms of the faithful were organized and distributed by the officials of the synagogue.

The shofar, or ram's horn, was a part of the furniture of every synagogue; and it was blown at the new moon celebration every month, and especially at the New Year festival on the first day of Tisri, which was known as 'The Day of Shofar-blowing.' It seems very likely that the Pharisees would choose this day for the public giving of their alms;

and this may be the meaning of this passage. Otherwise to blow the trumpet before oneself may be used metaphorically for doing a thing in the most ostentatious way possible. There is no evidence for the statement, which appears first in Cyril of Alexandria, that the Pharisees had trumpets blown to collect the poor together to receive their alms.

'They have their reward.' The Greek word used here is common in the papyri for the reception of the full amount of a debt; and the corresponding noun means a receipt in full.

4. Wesley is doubtless right in supposing that this is a proverbial expression for secrecy. There is something like it in the Midrash, Prov. 11, 'Man has two hands; but he is not to rob with the one, and give alms with the other.'



good, whether secretly or openly), and with the doing it in the most effectual manner. For here is also an exception to be made: when you are fully persuaded in your own mind, that by your not concealing the good which is done, either you will yourself be enabled, or others excited, to do the more good, then you may not conceal it; then let your light appear, and, 'shine to all that are in the house.' But, unless where the glory of God and the good of mankind oblige you to the contrary, act in as private and unobserved a manner as the nature of the thing will admit; 'that thy alms may be in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, He shall reward thee openly'; perhaps in the present world—many instances of this stand recorded in all ages, but infallibly in the world to come, before the general assembly of men and angels.

II. 1. From works of charity or mercy our Lord proceeds to those which are termed 'works of piety.' 'And when thou prayest,' saith He, 'thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men.' 'Thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are.' Hypocrisy, then, or insincerity, is the first thing we are to guard against in prayer. Beware not to speak what thou dost not mean. Prayer is the lifting up of the heart to God: all words of prayer, without this, are mere hypocrisy. Whenever therefore thou attemptest to pray, see that it be thy one design to commune with God, to lift up thy heart to Him, to pour out thy soul before Him, not as the hypocrites, who love, or are wont, 'to pray standing in the synagogues,' the exchange, or market-places, 'and in the corners of the streets,' wherever

II. 1. The synagogues were always open for prayer, and it was usual for the stricter professors of religion to go up to the Temple in Jerusalem or to the synagogue in their own village to present their devotions at the three daily hours of prayer. So did the Pharisee in the parable, and Peter and John

(Acts iii. 1). But if they could not get to the synagogue, they offered their prayers wherever they might be at the appointed hour. Conspicuous with their large phylacteries and their broad-fringed Tallith, the Pharisees thus made their prayers to be seen of men.

the most people are, 'that they may be seen of men': this was the sole design, the motive, and end, of the prayers which they there repeated. 'Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.' They are to expect none from your Father which is in heaven.

2. But it is not only the having an eye to the praise of men, which cuts us off from any reward in heaven; which leaves us no room to expect the blessing of God upon our works, whether of piety or mercy. Purity of intention is equally destroyed by a view to any temporal reward whatever. If we repeat our prayers, if we attend the public worship of God, if we relieve the poor, with a view to gain or interest, it is not a whit more acceptable to God, than if it were done with a view to praise. Any temporal view, any motive whatever on this side eternity, any design but that of promoting the glory of God, and the happiness of men for God's sake, makes every action, however fair it may appear to men, an abomination unto the Lord.

3. 'But when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret. There is a time when thou art openly to glorify God, to pray, and praise Him in the great congregation. But when thou desirest more largely and more particularly to make thy requests known unto God, whether it be in the evening, or in the morning, or at noonday, 'enter into thy closet, and shut thy door.' Use all the privacy thou canst. (Only leave it not undone, whether thou hast any closet, any privacy, or no. Pray to God, if it be possible, when none seeth but He, but if otherwise, pray to God.) Thus 'pray to thy Father which is in secret'; 'pour out all thy heart before Him, 'and thy Father which seeth in secret, He shall reward thee openly.'

4. 'But when ye pray,' even in secret, 'use not vain repetitions, as the Heathen do', *μὴ βαττολογήσητε*. Do not use

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2. 'Any motive whatever on this side eternity.' Surely this is too strong; indeed, if the only motive for prayer and almsgiving is to gain a reward in heaven, they are but a refined form of self-seeking. In almsgiving we are moved by the desire

to help our fellow men; in prayer we are seeking primarily for present communion with God.

3. 'Closet' is used in the older sense of a private chamber.

4. These two verses have reference to the prayers of the heathen,

abundance of words without any meaning. Say not the same thing over and over again ; think not the fruit of your prayers depends on the length of them, like the Heathens ; for ‘ they think they shall be heard for their much speaking.’

The thing here reprov'd is not simply the length, any more than the shortness, of our prayers ;—but, first, length without meaning ; speaking much, and meaning little or nothing, the using (not all repetitions, for our Lord Himself prayed thrice, repeating the same words, but) vain repetitions, as the Heathens did, reciting the names of their gods over and over ; as they do among Christians (vulgarly so called), and not among the Papists only, who say over and over the same string of prayers, without ever feeling what they speak secondly, the thinking to be heard for our much speaking, the fancying God measures prayers by their length, and is best pleas'd with those which contain the most words, which sound the longest in His ears. These are such instances of superstition and folly as all who are named by the name of Christ should leave to the Heathens, to them on whom the glorious light of the gospel hath never shined.

5. ‘ Be not ye therefore like unto them.’ Ye who have tasted of the grace of God in Christ Jesus are thoroughly convinced, ‘ your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him.’ So that the end of your praying is not to inform God, as though He knew not your wants already,

not to those of the Pharisees ; and are probably an editorial insertion from some other saying of our Lord. Many heathen prayers consisted of endless repetitions of some formula of worship ; cf. Acts xix. 34. Modern parallels are the prayer-wheel of the Buddhists and the rosaries of the Romish Church.

5. It is curious to find Wesley placing the sole reason of prayer in its subjective influence on the offerer. It is true that God needs no information from us as to our needs ; but He does require our co-operation. Prayer is a *vera causa*

of its own answer. It is a putting forth of spiritual energy on our part which is a necessary factor in the production of the desired result. In prayer we become ‘ fellow workers with God ’ ; witness Jacob wrestling with the angel, or Elijah on the top of Carmel. Unless we ‘ perceive that energy has gone out of us ’ our prayers will have no effect. Prayer is not a sort of spiritual penny-in-the-slot device, but a divinely appointed method of applying spiritual force in fellowship with God, the source of all power.

but rather to inform yourselves; to fix the sense of those wants more deeply in your hearts, and the sense of your continual dependence on Him who only is able to supply all your wants. It is not so much to move God, who is always more ready to give than you to ask, as to move yourselves, that you may be willing and ready to receive the good things He has prepared for you.

III. 1. After having taught the true nature and ends of prayer, our Lord subjoins an example of it, even that divine form of prayer which seems in this place to be proposed by way of pattern chiefly, as the model and standard of all our

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III. 1. The Rabbis were accustomed to furnish their disciples with forms of prayer; and it would appear that John the Baptist had followed their example. The Lord's Prayer was our Lord's response to a request from His disciples that He should do the same thing for them. As is clear from St. Luke's account, the prayer was in the first instance intended to be repeated verbatim—'when ye pray, say,' &c.; and from the earliest times it has formed part of the liturgy of all Christian churches. It occurs twice in the Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer of the Church of England, and again in the Litany, the Doxology, however, being omitted on the second occurrence in the daily prayers and the Litany. In 1552 the practice was introduced of the whole congregation joining in the Lord's Prayer, except at the commencement of the service; and in 1662 the people are directed to repeat it with the minister wherever it is used. This was also the practice in the Greek Church. The Westminster Assembly, whilst rejecting the use of the Book of Common Prayer, recommends the Lord's Prayer 'to be used in the prayers

of the Church'; but the strong opposition in Scotland to everything that savoured of liturgical prescription led to its disuse. Hence when Wesley began to preach in Scotland, he found it necessary in 1766 to declare his own practice in the conduct of public service: 'I always use a short private prayer when I attend the public service of God. I stand whenever I sing the praise of God in public. I always kneel when I pray in public. I generally in public use the Lord's Prayer. I advise every preacher connected with me, whether in England or Scotland, herein to tread in my steps' (*Journal*, June 5, 1766). But, except where the Liturgy was used, the Methodists objected to the repeating of the Lord's Prayer after the minister, as a sort of concession to Anglicanism; and it is only within the last fifty years that the practice has become general. Now that it is so, it is most desirable that the minister should use the form prescribed in our Book of Offices, which is identical with that in the Church of England Liturgy, and that without any, even the slightest, alteration. The substitution of 'who art in heaven' for 'which art in

prayers: 'After this manner therefore pray ye.' Whereas, elsewhere He enjoins the use of these very words 'He said unto them, When ye pray, say' (Luke xi. 2).

2. We may observe, in general, concerning this divine prayer, first, that it contains all we can reasonably or innocently pray for. There is nothing which we have need to ask of God, nothing which we can ask without offending Him, which is not included, either directly or indirectly, in this comprehensive form. Secondly, that it contains all we can reasonably or innocently desire: whatever is for the glory of God, whatever is needful or profitable, not only for ourselves, but for every creature in heaven and earth. And, indeed, our prayers are the proper test of our desires, nothing being fit to have a place in our desires which is not fit to have a place in our prayers: what we may not pray for, neither should we desire. Thirdly, that it contains all our duty to God and man; whatsoever things are pure and holy, whatsoever God requires of the children of men, whatsoever is acceptable in His sight, whatsoever it is whereby we may profit our neighbour, being expressed or implied therein.

3. It consists of three parts,—the preface, the petitions, and the doxology, or conclusion. The preface, 'Our Father which art in heaven,' lays a general foundation for prayer; comprising what we must first know of God, before we can pray in confidence of being heard. It likewise points out to us all those tempers with which we are to approach to God, which are most essentially requisite, if we desire either our prayers or our lives should find acceptance with Him.

4. 'Our Father': if He is a Father, then He is good,

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heaven,' and of 'those' for 'them' in the fifth petition, is venial, though undesirable; but it is unpardonable to say 'as in heaven, so on earth,' 'give us each day' or 'day by day' our daily bread, and 'deliver us from all evil.' I have even heard 'an affectioned ass' pray, 'leave us not in temptation.' No one with the least tincture of modesty or good

taste will so obtrude his miserable self in this great universal prayer. The form in the Scottish Shorter Catechism follows the Matthew version exactly, reading 'Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors' and 'for ever' instead of 'for ever and ever'; but this is not our Methodist form.

then He is loving, to His children. And here is the first and great reason for prayer. God is willing to bless, let us ask for a blessing. 'Our Father,'—our Creator the Author of our being, He who raised us from the dust of the earth, who breathed into us the breath of life, and we became living souls. But if He made us, let us ask, and He will not withhold any good thing from the work of His own hands. 'Our Father,'—our Preserver; who, day by day, sustains the life He has given, of whose continuing love we now and every moment receive life, and breath, and all things. So much the more boldly let us come to Him, and we shall 'obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.' Above all, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of all that believe in Him, who justifies us 'freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus', who hath 'blotted out all our sins, and healed all our infirmities'; who hath received us for His own children, by adoption and grace; and, 'because' we 'are sons, hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into' our 'hearts, crying, Abba, Father', who 'hath begotten us again of incorruptible seed,' and 'created us anew in Christ Jesus.' Therefore we know that He heareth us always, therefore we pray to Him without ceasing. We pray, because we love, and 'we love Him, because He first loved us.'

5. 'Our Father': not *mine* only who now cry unto Him, but *ours* in the most extensive sense. The God and 'Father of the spirits of all flesh', the Father of angels and men: so the very Heathens acknowledge Him to be, *Πατήρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε*. The Father of the universe, of all the families both in heaven and earth. Therefore with Him there is no respect of persons. He loveth all that He hath made. 'He is loving unto every man, and His mercy is over all His works.' And the Lord's delight is in them that fear Him, and put their trust in His mercy, in them that trust in Him through the Son of His love, knowing they are 'accepted in the Beloved.' But 'if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another', yea, all mankind, seeing 'God so loved the world, that He

5. The Greek phrase quoted occurs Hesiod, as a title of Zeus. See frequently both in Homer and Hesiod, i. 59; Hom., *Iliad*, i. 544.

gave His only-begotten Son,' even to die the death, that they 'might not perish, but have everlasting life.'

6. 'Which art in heaven': high and lifted up, God over all, blessed for ever, who, sitting on the circle of the heavens, beholdeth all things both in heaven and earth, whose eye pervades the whole sphere of created being, yea, and of uncreated night; unto whom 'are known all His works,' and all the works of every creature, not only 'from the beginning of the world' (a poor, low, weak translation) but ἀπ' αἰῶνος, from all *eternity*, from everlasting to everlasting, who constrains the host of heaven, as well as the children of men, to cry out with wonder and amazement, O the depth! 'the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God'! 'Which art in heaven' the Lord and Ruler of all, superintending and disposing all things, who art the King of kings, and Lord of lords, the blessed and only Potentate, who art strong and girded about with power, doing whatsoever pleaseth Thee; the Almighty, for whensoever Thou wilt, to do is present with Thee. 'In heaven' eminently there. Heaven is Thy throne, 'the place where Thine honour' particularly 'dwelleth.' But not there alone, for Thou fillest heaven and earth, the whole expanse of space. 'Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Glory be to Thee, O Lord most high!'

Therefore should we 'serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice unto Him with reverence.' Therefore should we think, speak, and act, as continually under the eye, in the immediate presence, of the Lord, the King.

6. 'Uncreated night': a reminiscence of Milton, *Par. Lost*, ii. 150, 'The wide womb of uncreated night.' Milton means by it the region between heaven and hell, which was still given up to darkness and chaos:

Where eldest Night  
And Chaos, ancestors of Nature, hold  
Eternal anarchy. (ii. 894.)

ἀπ' αἰῶνος means 'from the beginning of the heavens and the earth,'

'of the present age.' This is what the A.V. translators meant by 'from the beginning of the world'; Wesley's condemnation of their rendering is undeserved.

'Heaven and earth,' &c.: the last clause of the Trisagion ascription in the Communion Service.

'Rejoice unto Him with reverence': the Prayer-Book version of Ps. ii. 11.

7. 'Hallowed be Thy name.' This is the first of the six petitions whereof the prayer itself is composed. The name of God is God Himself, the nature of God, so far as it can be discovered to man. It means therefore, together with His existence, all His attributes or perfections.—His Eternity, particularly signified by His great and incommunicable name, *JEHOVAH*, as the Apostle John translates it, *Τὸ Α καὶ τὸ Ω, ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος*—'The Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end; He which is, and which was, and which is to come';—His fullness of Being, denoted by His other great name, *I AM THAT I AM*!—His omnipresence:—His omnipotence, who is indeed the only Agent in the material world; all matter being essentially dull and inactive, and moving only as it is moved by the finger of God, and He is the spring of action in every creature, visible and invisible, which could neither act nor exist, without the con-

7. 'Six petitions.' Some of the commentators reckon seven petitions, dividing the sixth into two; but Wesley's arrangement is the better. There are thus three general petitions, and three individual.

'Jehovah': the proper name of God as the God of Israel. According to *E* (Exod. iii. 10), this name was revealed to Moses at the Burning Bush; but *J* uses it from the beginning of his history. *E* derives it from the Hebrew verb 'to be,' and gives it first in the form *EHYEH*, I am, and then in the third person *YHVH*, he will be. These are not, as Wesley suggests, two names, but variants of the same. The second form became the normal one, and occurs 6,823 times in the O.T. About the beginning of the third century B.C. the Jews began to avoid pronouncing it, and substituted for it wherever it occurred in the Scriptures *Adonai* (my Lord). In the LXX and the N.T. it is always rendered ὁ κύριος, the Lord. The

Masoretes consequently wrote it with the vowels of *Adonai*, to indicate to the reader that he was to read it in that way. Hence it came to be transliterated in modern languages as *Jehovah*; the e, o, and a being the vowels of *Adonai*. But this was certainly not its original pronunciation; most probably it should be read *YAHVEH*. Modern scholars have usually adopted this spelling; but as it is not at all certain that it is correct, and as *Jehovah* has established itself firmly in our literature, it is a piece of pedantry to attempt to change it. The A.V. translators always print it in capitals, the *LORD*; and the R.V. has timidly followed their lead. The American Revisers have with great advantage printed it *Jehovah* throughout. Whether the derivation of *E* is right or not, it is the one which has been generally adopted, and it suggests the Eternity of God. He is the great *I AM*. 'The Apostle John.' Wesley



tinual influx and agency of His almighty power,—His wisdom, clearly deduced from the things that are seen, from the goodly order of the universe;—His Trinity in Unity, and Unity in Trinity, discovered to us in the very first line of His written Word, *בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים*,—literally. *the Gods created*, a plural noun joined with a verb of the singular number; as well as in every part of His subsequent revelations, given by the mouth of all His holy Prophets and Apostles,—His essential purity and holiness;—and, above all, His love, which is the very brightness of His glory.

In praying that God, or His name, may be hallowed or glorified, we pray that He may be known, such as He is, by all that are capable thereof, by all intelligent beings, and with affections suitable to that knowledge, that He may be duly honoured, and feared, and loved, by all in heaven above and in the earth beneath; by all angels and men, whom for that end He has made capable of knowing and loving Him to eternity.

8. 'Thy kingdom come.' This has a close connexion with the preceding petition. In order that the name of God may be hallowed, we pray that His kingdom, the kingdom of Christ, may come. This kingdom then comes to a particular person, when he 'repents and believes the gospel', when he is taught of God, not only to know himself, but to know Jesus Christ and Him crucified. As 'this is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent', so it is the kingdom of God begun below, set up in the believer's heart; 'the Lord God Omnipotent' then 'reigneth,' when He is known through Christ Jesus. He taketh unto Himself His mighty power, that He may subdue all things unto Himself. He goeth on in the soul conquering and to conquer, till He hath

naturally assumes the Johannine authorship of the Apocalypse, which is by no means impossible.

The generic name Elohim, which can be applied to the gods of the various nations, as well as to Jehovah, the God of Israel, is a plural of Majesty, like the *WE* used by

monarchs in their proclamations, and has not any plural significance, as the singular verb which follows it shows. The idea that it is an adumbration of the doctrine of the Trinity is often found in the older commentators, but can hardly be maintained.

put all things under His feet, till ' every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.'

When therefore God shall ' give His Son the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession ' ; when ' all kingdoms shall bow before Him, and all nations shall do Him service ' , when ' the mountain of the Lord's house,' the church of Christ, ' shall be established in the top of the mountains ' , when ' the fullness of the Gentiles shall come in, and all Israel shall be saved ' ; then shall it be seen, that ' the Lord is King, and hath put on glorious apparel,' appearing to every soul of man as King of kings and Lord of lords. And it is meet for all those who love His appearing, to pray that He would hasten the time , that this His kingdom, the kingdom of grace, may come quickly, and swallow up all the kingdoms of the earth , that all mankind, receiving Him for their King, truly believing in His name, may be filled with righteousness, and peace, and joy, with holiness and happiness , till they are removed hence into His heavenly kingdom, there to reign with Him for ever and ever.

For this also we pray in those words, ' Thy kingdom come ' we pray for the coming of His everlasting kingdom, the kingdom of glory in heaven, which is the continuation and perfection of the kingdom of grace on earth. Consequently this, as well as the preceding petition, is offered up for the whole intelligent creation, who are all interested in this grand event, the final renovation of all things, by God's putting an end to misery and sin, to infirmity and death, taking all things into His own hands, and setting up the kingdom which endureth throughout all ages.

Exactly answerable to all this are those awful words in the prayer at the burial of the dead : ' Beseeching Thee, that it may please Thee of Thy gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of Thine elect, and to hasten Thy kingdom : that we, with all those that are departed in the true faith of

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8. ' Hath put on glorious apparel ' :  
the Prayer-Book version of Ps. xciii. 1.

' The whole intelligent creation.'  
See the interesting sermon (No. LX)

on Rom. viii. 19-22, in which Wesley declares his belief in the immortality and future blessedness of the lower animals.

Thy holy name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in Thy everlasting glory.'

9. 'Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.' This is the necessary and immediate consequence wherever the kingdom of God is come, wherever God dwells in the soul by faith, and Christ reigns in the heart by love.

It is probable, many, perhaps the generality of men, at the first view of these words, are apt to imagine they are only an expression of, or petition for, resignation, for a readiness to suffer the will of God, whatsoever it be, concerning us. And this is unquestionably a divine and excellent temper, a most precious gift of God. But this is not what we pray for in this petition; at least, not in the chief and primary sense of it. We pray, not so much for a passive, as for an active conformity to the will of God, in saying, 'Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.'

How is it done by the angels of God in heaven—those who now circle His throne rejoicing? They do it *willingly*, they love His commandments, and gladly hearken to His words. It is their meat and drink to do His will; it is their highest glory and joy. They do it *continually*; there is no interruption in their willing service. They rest not day nor night, but employ every hour (speaking after the manner of men, otherwise our measures of duration, days, and nights, and hours, have no place in eternity) in fulfilling His commands, in executing His designs, in performing the counsel of His will. And they do it *perfectly*. No sin, no defect belongs to

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9. Probably the words 'as in heaven, so on earth' apply to each of the first three petitions.

The remark as to the inapplicability of our measures of time to eternity is most just, and should not be overlooked in the discussion of the meaning of eternal punishment.

Our Lord adopts the current Jewish angelology, which conceived of God as surrounded by a host of attendants, holy in character, and

always obeying the voice of His word. Whilst He uses the language of His own time in regard to angels, He does not necessarily commit us to any theory about their origin or their personal existence. And it must be remembered that there are suggestions that the angels are rather personifications of the forces of nature: He maketh winds His angels, and flaming fire His ministers. The question is too difficult and complicated to be discussed in a note.

angelic minds. It is true, 'the stars are not pure in His sight,' even the morning-stars that sing together before Him. 'In His sight,' that is, in comparison of Him, the very angels are not pure. But this does not imply, that they are not pure *in themselves*. Doubtless they are, they are without spot and blameless. They are altogether devoted to His will, and perfectly obedient in all things.

If we view them in another light, we may observe, the angels of God in heaven do *all* the will of God. And they do nothing else, nothing but what they are absolutely assured is His will. Again: they do all the will of God *as* He willeth, in the manner which pleases Him, and no other. Yea, and they do this, only *because* it is His will; for this end, and no other reason.

10. When therefore we pray, that the will of God may 'be done in earth as it is in heaven,' the meaning is, that all the inhabitants of the earth, even the whole race of mankind, may do the will of their Father which is in heaven, as *willingly* as the holy angels; that these may do it *continually*, even as they, without any interruption of their willing service; yea, and that they may do it *perfectly*—that 'the God of peace, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, may make them perfect in every good work to do His will, and work in them' all 'which is well pleasing in His sight.'

In other words, we pray that we and all mankind may do the whole will of God in all things; and nothing else, not the least thing but what is the holy and acceptable will of God we pray that we may do the whole will of God *as* He willeth, in the manner that pleases Him: and, lastly, that we may do it *because* it is His will; that this may be the sole reason and ground, the whole and only motive, of whatsoever we think, or whatsoever we speak or do.

11. 'Give us this day our daily bread.' In the three former petitions we have been praying for all mankind. We come now more particularly to desire a supply for our own

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11. It is hardly necessary to point out that 'meat' in the A.V. means food of any kind, not flesh-meat.

Tertullian, Cyprian, Cyril of Jerusalem, Athanasius, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine take the bread to

wants. Not that we are directed, even here, to confine our prayer altogether to ourselves, but this, and each of the following petitions, may be used for the whole Church of Christ upon earth.

By 'bread' we may understand all things needful, whether for our souls or bodies; τὰ πρὸς ζωὴν καὶ εὐσέβειαν—the things pertaining to life and godliness: we understand not barely the outward bread, what our Lord terms 'the meat which perisheth', but much more the spiritual bread, the grace of God, the food 'which endureth unto everlasting life.' It was the judgement of many of the ancient Fathers, that we are here to understand the sacramental bread also, daily received in the beginning by the whole Church of Christ, and highly esteemed, till the love of many waxed cold, as the grand channel whereby the grace of His Spirit was conveyed to the souls of all the children of God.

'Our daily bread.' The word we render *daily* has been differently explained by different commentators. But the most plain and natural sense of it seems to be this, which is retained in almost all translations, as well ancient as modern,—what is sufficient for this day; and so for each day as it succeeds.

12. 'Give us': for we claim nothing of right, but only of free mercy. We deserve not the air we breathe, the earth that bears, or the sun that shines upon us. All our desert, we own, is hell: but God loves us freely, therefore, we ask Him to give, what we can no more procure for ourselves, than we can merit it at His hands.

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mean the bread of the Sacrament; though they do not exclude the literal meaning.

The word ἐπιούσιος occurs nowhere else, and its meaning is uncertain. Various interpretations are: (1) what is needed for to-day; (2) for subsistence; (3) for the coming day; (4) super-essential (referring to the sacramental bread). On the whole, no better rendering has been suggested than 'our daily bread.'

12. 'All our desert is hell.' In so far as we have wilfully sinned, this may be true. But as creatures of God, we have a claim on the providential care of Him who is a faithful Creator; and as the children of God, we have a right to look to our Father for support and help. Even an earthly father cannot repudiate his obligation to feed, clothe, and educate his children; still less could our heavenly Father be thought capable of such indifference to our needs.

Not that either the goodness or the power of God is a reason for us to stand idle. It is His will that we should use all diligence in all things, that we should employ our utmost endeavours, as much as if our success were the natural effect of our own wisdom and strength; and then, as though we had done nothing, we are to depend on Him, the Giver of every good and perfect gift.

'This day': for we are to take no thought for the morrow. For this very end has our wise Creator divided life into these little portions of time, so clearly separated from each other, that we might look on every day as a fresh gift of God, another life, which we may devote to His glory, and that every evening may be as the close of life, beyond which we are to see nothing but eternity.

13. 'And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.' As nothing but sin can hinder the bounty of God from flowing forth upon every creature, so this petition naturally follows the former, that, all hindrances being removed, we may the more clearly trust in the God of love for every manner of thing which is good.

'Our trespasses': the word properly signifies *our debts*. Thus our sins are frequently represented in Scripture, every sin laying us under a fresh debt to God, to whom we already owe, as it were, ten thousand talents. What, then, can we answer when He shall say, 'Pay me that thou owest'? We are utterly insolvent, we have nothing to pay; we have wasted all our substance. Therefore, if He deal with us according to the rigour of His law, if He exact what He justly may, He must command us to be 'bound hand and foot, and delivered over to the tormentors.'

Indeed we are already bound hand and foot by the chains

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13. The idea of sin as a debt is characteristically Jewish. St. Luke substitutes the more general 'sins,' though the second clause in his version, 'for we ourselves also forgive every one that is indebted to us,' show that the word in his original was 'debts'; his Gentile readers would

have misunderstood it, as they only used the word in the sense of monetary obligations. The Prayer-Book version has 'trespasses,' following Tyndale's version; it is not an adequate translation, as it only includes sins of commission. But it is better to retain it for liturgical

of our own sins. These, considered with regard to ourselves, are chains of iron and fetters of brass. They are wounds where-with the world, the flesh, and the devil have gashed and mangled us all over. They are diseases that drink up our blood and spirits, that bring us down to the chambers of the grave. But, considered as they are here, with regard to God, they are debts immense and numberless. Well, therefore, seeing we have nothing to pay, may we cry unto Him, that He would frankly forgive us all !

The word translated *forgive*, implies either to forgive a debt, or to unloose a chain. And if we attain the former, the latter follows of course if our debts are forgiven, the chains fall off our hands. As soon as ever, through the free grace of God in Christ, we 'receive forgiveness of sins,' we receive likewise 'a lot among those which are sanctified, by faith which is in Him.' Sin has lost its power : it has no dominion over those who are under grace, that is, in favour with God. As 'there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,' so they are freed from sin as well as from guilt. 'The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in' them, and they 'walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.'

14. 'As we forgive them that trespass against us.' In these words our Lord clearly declares both on what condition, and in what degree or manner, we may look to be forgiven of God. All our trespasses and sins are forgiven us *if* we forgive, and *as* we forgive, others. This is a point of the utmost importance. And our blessed Lord is so jealous lest at any time we should let it slip out of our thoughts, that He not only inserts it in the body of His prayer, but presently after repeats it twice over. 'If,' saith He, 'ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you : but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses' (verses 14, 15). Secondly, God forgives us *as* we

purposes, as the ordinary Christian man interprets it of all sins.

The idea of forgiveness as meaning the unloosing of a chain is not in the text ; though of course the forgiveness of a debt is in a sense

the loosing of a bond. But this is quite secondary, and Wesley's amplification of it to mean deliverance from the power of sin is brought to the passage.

forgive others. So that if any malice or bitterness, if any taint of unkindness or anger remains, if we do not clearly, fully, and from the heart, forgive all men their trespasses, we so far cut short the forgiveness of our own God cannot clearly and fully forgive us : He may show us some degree of mercy, but we will not suffer Him to blot out all our sins, and forgive all our iniquities.

In the meantime, while we do not from our hearts forgive our neighbour his trespasses, what manner of prayer are we offering to God whenever we utter these words ? We are indeed setting God at open defiance ; we are daring Him to do His worst. 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us !' That is, in plain terms, 'Do not Thou forgive us at all ; we desire no favour at Thy hands. We pray that Thou wilt keep our sins in remembrance, and that Thy wrath may abide upon us.' But can you seriously offer such a prayer to God ? And hath He not yet cast you quick into hell ? O tempt Him no longer ! Now, even now, by His grace, forgive as you would be forgiven ! Now have compassion on thy fellow servant, as God hath had, and will have, pity on thee !

15. 'And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil'—'And lead us not into temptation.' The word translated *temptation* means trial of any kind. And so the English word temptation, was formerly taken in an indifferent sense, although now it is usually understood of solicitation to sin. St. James uses the word in both these senses ; first, in its general, then in its restrained, acceptation. He takes it in the former sense when he saith, 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation : for when he is tried,' or approved of God, 'he shall receive the crown of life' (Jas. i. 12). He immediately adds, taking the word in the latter sense, 'Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man : but every man is tempted, when he is *drawn away* of his own lust,' or

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14. 'Quick,' in the old sense 'alive' ; as in the phrase 'the quick and the dead.'

15. It is doubtful whether we should translate 'from evil' or 'from the evil one.' St. Luke's



*desire*, ἐξελκόμενος—drawn out of God, in whom alone he is safe—‘*and enticed*’; caught as a fish with a bait. Then it is, when he is thus *drawn away and enticed*, that he properly enters into temptation. Then temptation covers him as a cloud; it overspreads his whole soul. Then how hardly shall he escape out of the snare! Therefore we beseech God ‘not to lead us into temptation, that is (seeing God tempteth no man), not to suffer us to be led into it. ‘But deliver us from evil.’ Rather, ‘*from the evil one*,’ ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ. ‘Ο πονηρὸς is unquestionably *the wicked one*, emphatically so called, the prince and god of this world, who works with mighty power in the children of disobedience. But all those who are the children of God by faith are delivered out of his hands. He may fight against them; and so he will. But he cannot conquer, unless they betray their own souls. He may torment for a time, but he cannot destroy; for God is on their side, who will not fail, in the end, to ‘avenge His own elect, that cry unto Him day and night.’ Lord, when we are tempted, suffer us not to enter into temptation! Do Thou make a way for us to escape, that the wicked one touch us not!

16. The conclusion of this divine prayer, commonly called ‘the doxology,’ is a solemn thanksgiving, a compendious acknowledgement of the attributes and works of God. ‘For Thine is the kingdom,’—the sovereign right of all things that are, or ever were created; yea, Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Thy dominion endureth throughout all ages. ‘The power,’—the executive power whereby Thou governest all things in Thy everlasting kingdom, whereby Thou doest whatsoever pleaseth Thee, in all places of Thy dominion. ‘And the glory,’—the praise due from every creature, for Thy power,

omission of the whole clause favours the latter interpretation; for the idea of the devil would be strange to his Gentile readers. But the sense rather demands ‘from evil.’ The full meaning will thus be: ‘Do not suffer us to be brought into circumstances of trial; but should we be so brought, deliver us from the

evil into which trial (or temptation) tends to betray us.’ Or with a slightly different turn, ‘Do not bring us into trial, but in any case deliver us from falling into sin.’ It is obvious that we have here one petition, not two.

16. The doxology is not part of the original text, but was very

and the mightiness of Thy kingdom, and for all Thy wondrous works which Thou workest from everlasting, and shalt do, world without end, 'for ever and ever. Amen!' So be it!

I believe it will not be unacceptable to the serious reader to subjoin

A PARAPHRASE ON THE LORD'S PRAYER

- 1 FATHER of all! whose powerful voice  
    Called forth this universal frame;  
Whose mercies over all rejoice,  
    Through endless ages still the same.  
Thou, by Thy word, upholdest all;  
    Thy bounteous love to all is showed:  
Thou hear'st Thy every creature's call,  
    And fillest every mouth with good.
- 2 In heaven Thou reign'st, enthroned in light,  
    Nature's expanse beneath Thee spread;  
Earth, air, and sea, before Thy sight,  
    And hell's deep gloom, are open laid.  
Wisdom, and might, and love, are Thine;  
    Prostrate before Thy face we fall,  
Confess Thine attributes divine,  
    And hail Thee Sovereign Lord of all!
- 3 Thee, Sovereign Lord, let all confess,  
    That moves in earth, or air, or sky,  
Revere Thy power, Thy goodness bless,  
    Tremble before Thy piercing eye.  
All ye who owe to Him your birth,  
    In praise your every hour employ:  
Jehovah reigns! Be glad, O earth!  
    And shout, ye morning stars, for joy!

early introduced into the prayer for liturgical purposes.

The subjoined hymn first appeared in *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1742). From its style it has been generally attributed to John rather than Charles Wesley, though there is no definite evidence on the point. (See Telford's *Methodist Hymn-Book Illus-*

*trated*, p. 74.) The version in the 1771 edition of the Sermons agrees with that in Dr. Osborn's reprint (ii. 335), except that in verse 5, line 7, Osborn has 'hosts' for 'host,' and in verse 9, line 3, 'and' for 'in.' It was divided into three parts in the Hymn-Book of 1780; and has appeared in this form in all the subse-

- 4 Son of Thy Sire's eternal love,  
 Take to Thyself Thy mighty power ;  
 Let all earth's sons Thy mercy prove,  
 Let all Thy bleeding grace adore.  
 The triumphs of Thy love display :  
 In every heart reign Thou alone ;  
 Till all Thy foes confess Thy sway,  
 And glory ends what grace begun.
- 5 Spirit of grace, and health, and power,  
 Fountain of light and love below ;  
 Abroad Thine healing influence shower,  
 O'er all the nations let it flow.  
 In flame our hearts with perfect love ;  
 In us the work of faith fulfil ;  
 So not heaven's host shall swifter move,  
 Than we on earth to do Thy will.
- 6 Father, 'tis Thine each day to yield  
 Thy children's wants a fresh supply :  
 Thou cloth'st the lilies of the field,  
 And hearest the young ravens cry.  
 On Thee we cast our care ; we live  
 Through Thee, who know'st our every need.  
 O feed us with Thy grace, and give  
 Our souls this day the living bread !
- 7 Eternal, spotless Lamb of God,  
 Before the world's foundation slain,  
 Sprinkle us ever with Thy blood ;  
 O cleanse, and keep us ever clean !  
 To every soul (all praise to Thee !)  
 Our bowels of compassion move ;  
 And all mankind by this may see  
 God is in us ; for God is love.

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quent editions. It is Hymns 42, 43, and 44 in the present Hymn-Book ; but the first line of verse 4 is altered to 'Eternal Son, eternal Love,' presumably through the possibility of an Arian interpretation of 'Son of thy Sire's eternal love' ; and in

verse 7, line 6, 'Our bowels of compassion move' is changed to 'Our tenderest compassions move,' in pursuance of the wise decision to banish all the 'bowels' and 'worms' from the new book. The last verse is a favourite doxology in America.

- 8 Giver and Lord of life, whose power  
And guardian care for all are free,  
To Thee, in fierce temptation's hour,  
From sin and Satan let us flee.  
Thine, Lord, we are, and ours Thou art ;  
In us be all Thy goodness showed ;  
Renew, enlarge, and fill our heart  
With peace, and joy, and heaven, and God.
- 9 Blessing and honour, praise and love,  
Co-equal, co-eternal Three,  
In earth below, in heaven above,  
By all Thy works be paid to Thee.  
Thrice Holy ! Thine the kingdom is,  
The power omnipotent is Thine ;  
And when created nature dies,  
Thy never-ceasing glories shine.

## SERMON XXII

### UPON OUR LORD'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT

#### DISCOURSE VII

THE only fast prescribed in the law is that on the Great Day of Atonement, on the tenth day of the seventh month. After the return from the Captivity other fasts were instituted in commemoration of events connected with the siege and taking of Jerusalem on the seventeenth day of the fourth month (Tammuz), the ninth of the fifth month (Ab), the third of the seventh month (Tisri), and the tenth of the tenth month (Tebet). Special fasts were frequently proclaimed; and the practice of private fasting became more and more common. The Pharisees fasted every week on Mondays and Thursdays, and doubtless many of the more pious amongst the people followed their example. Hence our Lord, assuming that His hearers would fast as a part of their normal religious life, gives the directions here set out, as a warning against ostentation in fasting, and the practice of it with a view of securing a reputation for piety. Though He and His disciples would certainly keep the fast of the Day of Atonement, it is plain from Matt. ix. 14 that they did not observe the weekly fasts; and our Lord left no injunctions to His Church as to this means of grace. The Jewish Christians naturally took over into their new faith their old habit of fasting, and used it both privately and on certain special occasions. In the *Didache* we find bi-weekly fasts prescribed on Wednesdays and Fridays, instead of the days on which 'the hypocrites' fast, i.e. Mondays and Thursdays; but this would apply only to Jewish Christians. In the fourth century we find the forty days' fast of Lent generally established. During the fifth century the Rogation fast on the three days before Ascension Day was instituted in the Western Church; and also the Ember Days or fasts of the four seasons, on the Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays after the First Sunday in Lent, Pentecost, Holy Cross Day (September 14), and St. Lucy's Day (December 13). Peculiar to the Western Church were also the single-day fasts on the vigil before sixteen festivals and saints' days (set out at the beginning of the Book of Common Prayer). The Oxford Methodists made a point of observing all the fasts of the Church, including the Wednesdays as well as the Fridays of every week; and this Wesley

kept up rigidly during his residence in Georgia. After his return many of his society resolved on August 17, 1739, to observe all Fridays as fast-days ; and in the Rules of the Society (1743), which still stand good, members are required to evidence their desire of salvation by 'fasting or abstinence.' In the *Large Minutes* (1763) Mr. Wesley says under the head of fasting, 'God led us to this at Oxford. And He led all of you to it, when you first set out. How often do you fast now? Every Friday? In what degree?' In the *Form of Discipline* of 1797 this is enlarged upon: 'Do you fast every Friday? The neglect of this is sufficient to account for our feebleness and faintness of spirit. We are continually grieving the Holy Spirit by the habitual neglect of a plain duty! Let us amend from this hour. Begin next Friday, and avow this duty wherever you go.' It is also directed that 'A general fast shall be held in all our Societies, the first Friday after New Year's Day, after Lady Day, after Midsummer Day, and after Michaelmas Day.' This rule was reaffirmed by the Conference of 1900 (see also *Minutes*, 1920, p. 28). How far it is effectively observed in England I cannot say; it is certainly not observed in Australia.

I think it may be safely said that the tendency in Methodism has been to leave the time and measure of fasting to the conscience of the individual. Neither our Lord nor His Apostles left any explicit directions on this head; and we are not bound by the traditional practice of the early and mediaeval Churches, nor indeed by Wesley's own views, which were largely the result of his early High-Church training. On the other hand, the revival of fasting would make for a more robust and less self-indulgent type of character amongst us; and it is to be hoped that the study of this very sane and wise sermon may influence some of us to make experiment of this means of grace.

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*Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance :  
for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast.*

*Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*

*But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face ;  
That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in  
secret : and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.*

—MATT. vi. 16-18.

1. IT has been the endeavour of Satan, from the beginning of the world, to put asunder what God hath joined together; to separate inward from outward religion, to set one of these at variance with the other. And herein he has met with no small success among those who were 'ignorant of his devices.'

Many, in all ages, having a zeal for God, but not according

to knowledge, have been strictly attached to the 'righteousness of the law,' the performance of outward duties, but in the meantime wholly regardless of inward righteousness, 'the righteousness which is of God by faith.' And many have run into the opposite extreme, disregarding all outward duties, perhaps even 'speaking evil of the law, and judging the law,' so far as it enjoins the performance of them.

2. It is by this very device of Satan, that faith and works have been so often set at variance with each other. And many who had a real zeal for God have, for a time, fallen into the snare on either hand. Some have magnified faith to the utter exclusion of good works, not only from being the cause of our justification (for we know that a man is justified freely by the redemption which is in Jesus), but from being the necessary fruit of it, yea, from having any place in the religion of Jesus Christ. Others, eager to avoid this dangerous mistake, have run as much too far the contrary way, and either maintained that good works were the cause, at least the previous condition, of justification—or spoken of them as if they were all in all, the whole religion of Jesus Christ.

3. In the same manner have the end and the means of religion been set at variance with each other. Some well-meaning men have seemed to place all religion in attending the prayers of the Church, in receiving the Lord's supper, in hearing sermons, and reading books of piety; neglecting, meantime, the end of all these, the love of God and their

Par. 2. But in *Minutes*, 1770, Q. 28, 6, 3, Wesley says: 'We have received it as a maxim that a man is to do nothing in order to justification. Nothing can be more false. Whoever desires to find favour with God should cease from evil and learn to do well. Whoever repents should do works meet for repentance. And if this is not in order to find favour, what does he do them for? Is not this salvation by works? Not by the *merit* of works, but by works as a *condition*. What have we then been disputing about for

these thirty years? I am afraid, about words.' So Fletcher in *Checks*, ii. 6 (1770), says: 'Salvation is not by the merit of works, but by works as a condition.' In one sense every necessary condition is a part of the cause of an event; but what we generally mean by the cause is the condition which gives rise to the energy by which the result is brought about. It is a condition of the explosion of a charge that the gunpowder should be dry; but we should not usually speak of the dryness as the cause of the explosion.

neighbour. And this very thing has confirmed others in the neglect, if not contempt, of the ordinances of God—so wretchedly abused, to undermine and overthrow the very end they were designed to establish.

4. But of all the means of grace there is scarce any concerning which men have run into greater extremes, than that of which our Lord speaks in the above-mentioned words, I mean religious fasting. How have some exalted this beyond all Scripture and reason; and others utterly disregarded it—as it were, revenging themselves by undervaluing as much as the former had overvalued it! Those have spoken of it as if it were all in all, if not the end itself, yet infallibly connected with it: these, as if it were just nothing, as if it were a fruitless labour, which had no relation at all thereto. Whereas it is certain the truth lies between them both. It is not all, nor yet is it nothing. It is not the end, but it is a precious means thereto; a means which God Himself has ordained, and in which therefore, when it is duly used, He will surely give us His blessing.

In order to set this in the clearest light, I shall endeavour to show, first, what is the nature of fasting, and what the several sorts and degrees thereof, secondly, what are the reasons, grounds, and ends of it thirdly, how we may answer the most plausible objections against it and, fourthly, in what manner it should be performed.

I. 1. I shall endeavour to show, first, what is the nature of fasting, and what the several sorts and degrees thereof. As to the nature of it, all the inspired writers, both in the Old Testament and the New, take the word, to *fast*, in one single sense, for not to eat, to abstain from food. This is so clear, that it would be labour lost to quote the words of David, Nehemiah, Isaiah, and the prophets which followed, or of our Lord and His apostles, all agreeing in this, that to fast is, not to eat for a time prescribed.

2. To this, other circumstances were usually joined by them of old, which had no necessary connexion with it. Such were, the neglect of their apparel; the laying aside those



ornaments which they were accustomed to wear, the putting on mourning, the strewing ashes upon their head, or wearing sackcloth next their skin. But we find little mention made in the New Testament of any of these indifferent circumstances. Nor does it appear that any stress was laid upon them by the Christians of the purer ages, however some penitents might voluntarily use them, as outward signs of inward humiliation. Much less did the Apostles, or the Christians contemporary with them, beat or tear their own flesh such discipline as this was not unbecoming the priests or worshippers of Baal. The gods of the Heathens were but devils; and it was doubtless acceptable to their devil-god, when his priests (1 Kings xviii. 28) 'cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner, till the blood gushed out upon them', but it cannot be pleasing to Him, nor become His followers, who 'came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them.'

3. As to the degrees or measures of fasting, we have instances of some who have fasted several days together. So Moses, Elijah, and our blessed Lord, being endued with supernatural strength for that purpose, are recorded to have fasted, without intermission, 'forty days and forty nights.' But the time of fasting, more frequently mentioned in Scripture, is one day, from morning till evening. And this was the fast commonly observed among the ancient Christians. But besides these, they had also their half-fasts (*semi-jejunia*, as Tertullian

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I. 2. The idea that the gods of the heathen were devils finds its justification in the A.V. rendering of 1 Cor. x. 20, 'The Gentiles sacrifice to devils and not to God'; but the more correct translation is 'demons,' which means spiritual beings inferior to God, but not necessarily devils in our sense of the word. Milton has given wide currency to this view in *Paradise Lost*, Bk. I, where he identifies the various fallen angels with the gods of Syria, Greece, and Egypt. But it is more

correct to recognize in the objects of heathen worship sincere attempts to represent God, however imperfect and even degraded the results may have been.

3. Forty is the Hebrew round number, and must not be taken arithmetically. These prolonged fasts are in any case quite exceptional and extraordinary, and have no relation to Christian fasting.

Tertullian wrote his *De Jejuniis* about A.D. 210, after he had become a Montanist; it is a bitter attack

styles them) on the fourth and sixth days of the week (Wednesday and Friday), throughout the year, on which they took no sustenance till three in the afternoon, the time when they returned from the public service.

4. Nearly related to this, is what our Church seems peculiarly to mean by the term *abstinence*, which may be used when we cannot fast entirely, by reason of sickness or bodily weakness. This is the eating little, the abstaining in part; the taking a smaller quantity of food than usual. I do not remember any scriptural instance of this. But neither can I condemn it, for the Scripture does not. It may have its use, and receive a blessing from God.

5. The lowest kind of fasting, if it can be called by that name, is the abstaining from pleasant food. Of this, we have several instances in Scripture, besides that of Daniel and his brethren, who, from a peculiar consideration, namely, that they might 'not defile themselves with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank' (a daily provision of which the king had appointed for them), requested and obtained, of the prince of the eunuchs, pulse to eat, and water to drink (Dan. i. 8, &c.). Perhaps from a mistaken imitation of this might spring the very ancient custom of abstaining from flesh and wine during such times as were set apart for fasting and abstinence,—if it did not rather arise from a supposition that these were the most pleasant food, and a belief that it was proper to use what was least pleasing at those times of solemn approach to God.

6. In the Jewish Church there were some stated fasts.

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on the orthodox Christians, whom he calls Psychics. He calls fasts which terminated at the ninth hour (3 p.m.) semi-jejunia, half-fasts.

4. The Roman Church distinguishes between fasting and abstinence; but in the usage of the Anglican Church the two words are synonymous.

5. The Montanists observed what they called xerophagies (days of dry diet); in which, says Tertullian

(*De Jeuniis*, I) 'we keep our food unmoistened by any flesh, and by any juiciness, and by any kind of succulent fruit; not eating or drinking anything with the flavour of wine; also with abstinence from the bath, congruent with our dry diet.' In the Roman Church flesh is prohibited during Lent and on fast days; but the Church of England makes no such distinction between different kinds of food.

Such was the fast of the seventh month, appointed by God Himself to be observed by all Israel under the severest penalty. 'The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, On the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: and ye shall afflict your souls, to make an atonement for you before the Lord your God. For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people' (Lev. xxiii. 26, &c.). In after-ages, several other stated fasts were added to these. So mention is made, by the Prophet Zechariah, of the fast, not only 'of the seventh, but also of the fourth, of the fifth, and of the tenth month' (viii. 19).

In the ancient Christian Church there were likewise stated fasts, and those both annual and weekly. Of the former sort was that before Easter, observed by some for eight-and-forty hours, by others, for an entire week, by many, for two weeks, taking no sustenance till the evening of each day of the latter, those of the fourth and sixth days of the week, observed (as Epiphanius writes, remarking it as an undeniable fact) *ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ οἰκουμένῃ*—*in the whole habitable earth*, at least in every place where any Christians made their abode. The annual fasts in our Church are, 'the forty days of Lent, the Ember days at the four seasons, the Rogation days, and the Vigils or Eves of several solemn festivals; the weekly all Fridays in the year, except Christmas-day.'

But beside those which were fixed, in every nation fearing God there have always been occasional fasts, appointed from time to time, as the particular circumstances and occasions of each required. So when 'the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, came against Jehoshaphat to battle, Jehoshaphat set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah' (2 Chron. xx. 1, 3). And so, 'in the fifth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, in the ninth month, when they were afraid of the king of Babylon, the princes of Judah proclaimed a fast before the Lord, to all the people in Jerusalem' (Jer. xxxvi. 9).

6. See introduction.

Epiphanius was a father of the

fourth century. The reference is to *Haer.* lxxv. 6; *Expos. Fidei*, 22.

And, in like manner, particular persons, who take heed unto their ways, and desire to walk humbly and closely with God, will find frequent occasion for private seasons of thus afflicting their souls before their Father which is in secret. And it is to this kind of fasting that the directions here given do chiefly and primarily refer.

II. 1. I proceed to show, in the second place, what are the grounds, the reasons, and ends of fasting.

And, first, men who are under strong emotions of mind, who are affected with any vehement passion, such as sorrow or fear, are often swallowed up therein, and even forget to eat their bread. At such seasons they have little regard for food, not even what is needful to sustain nature, much less for any delicacy or variety, being taken up with quite different thoughts. Thus when Saul said, 'I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me'; it is recorded, 'He had eaten no bread all the day, nor all the night' (1 Sam. xxviii. 15, 20). Thus those who were in the ship with St. Paul, 'when no small tempest lay upon them, and all hope that they should be saved was taken away,' 'continued fasting, having taken nothing,' no regular meal, for fourteen days together' (Acts xxvii. 33). And thus David, and all the men that were with him, when they heard that the people were fled from the battle, and that many of the people were fallen and dead, and Saul and Jonathan his son were dead also, 'mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul and Jonathan, and for the house of Israel' (2 Sam. i. 12).

Nay, many times they whose minds are deeply engaged are impatient of any interruption, and even loathe their needful food, as diverting their thoughts from what they desire should engross their whole attention: even as Saul, when, on the occasion mentioned before, he had 'fallen all along upon the earth, and there was no strength in him,' yet said, 'I will not eat,' till 'his servants together with the woman, compelled him.'

2. Here, then, is the natural ground of fasting. One who is under deep affliction, overwhelmed with sorrow for sin, and

a strong apprehension of the wrath of God, would, without any rule, without knowing or considering whether it were a command of God or not, 'forget to eat his bread,' abstain not only from pleasant but even from needful food, like St. Paul, who, after he was led into Damascus, 'was three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink' (Acts ix. 9).

Yea, when the storm rose high, 'when an horrible dread overwhelmed' one who had [long] been without God in the world, his soul would 'loathe all manner of meat'; it would be displeasing and irksome to him, he would be impatient of anything that should interrupt his ceaseless cry, 'Lord, save! or I perish.'

How strongly is this expressed by our Church in the first part of the Homily on Fasting!—'When men feel in themselves the heavy burden of sin, see damnation to be the reward of it, and behold, with the eye of their mind, the horror of hell, they tremble, they quake, and are inwardly touched with sorrowfulness of heart, and cannot but accuse themselves, and open their grief unto Almighty God, and call unto Him for mercy. This being done seriously, their mind is so occupied (taken up), partly with sorrow and heaviness, partly with an earnest desire to be delivered from this danger of hell and damnation, that all desire of meat and drink is laid apart, and loathsomeness (or loathing) of all worldly things and pleasure cometh in place. So that nothing then liketh them more than to weep, to lament, to mourn, and both with words and behaviour of body to show themselves weary of life.'

3. Another reason or ground of fasting is this many of those who now fear God are deeply sensible how often they have sinned against Him, by the abuse of these lawful things. They know how much they have sinned by excess of food, how long they have transgressed the holy law of God, with regard to temperance, if not sobriety too, how they have indulged their sensual appetites, perhaps to the impairing even their bodily health, certainly to the no small hurt of

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II. 2. 'When an horrible dread overwhelmed' (Ps. liv. 4, Prayer-Book version).

their soul. For hereby they continually fed and increased that sprightly folly, that airiness of mind, that levity of temper, that gay inattention to things of the deepest concern, that giddiness and carelessness of spirit, which were no other than drunkenness of soul, which stupefied all their noblest faculties, no less than excess of wine or strong drink. To remove, therefore, the effect, they remove the cause : they keep at a distance from all excess. They abstain, as far as is possible, from what had wellnigh plunged them in everlasting perdition. They often wholly refrain ; always take care to be sparing and temperate in all things.

4. They likewise well remember how fullness of bread increased not only carelessness and levity of spirit, but also foolish and unholy desires, yea, unclean and vile affections. And this experience puts beyond all doubt. Even a genteel, regular sensuality is continually sensualizing the soul, and sinking it into a level with the beasts that perish. It cannot be expressed what an effect a variety and delicacy of food have on the mind as well as the body , making it just ripe for every pleasure of sense, as soon as opportunity shall invite. Therefore, on this ground also, every wise man will refrain his soul, and keep it low , will wean it more and more from all those indulgences of the inferior appetites, which naturally tend to chain it down to earth, and to pollute as well as debase it. Here is another perpetual reason for fasting , to remove the food of lust and sensuality, to withdraw the incentives of foolish and hurtful desires, of vile and vain affections.

5. Perhaps we need not altogether omit (although I know not if we should do well to lay any great stress upon it) another reason for fasting, which some good men have largely insisted on ; namely, the punishing themselves for having abused the good gifts of God, by sometimes wholly refraining from them , thus exercising a kind of holy revenge upon themselves, for their past folly and ingratitude, in turning the things which should have been for their health into an occasion

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5. The revenge mentioned in 2 Cor. vii. 11 seems rather to refer to the punishment inflicted by the Church on the wrong-doer who has done so much mischief by his abominable sin.

of falling. They suppose David to have had an eye to this, when he said, 'I wept and chastened,' or punished, 'my soul with fasting'; and St. Paul, when he mentions 'what revenge' godly sorrow occasioned in the Corinthians.

6. A fifth and more weighty reason for fasting is, that it is an help to prayer; particularly when we set apart larger portions of time for private prayer. Then especially it is that God is often pleased to lift up the souls of His servants above all the things of earth, and sometimes to rap them up, as it were, into the third heavens. And it is chiefly, as it is an help to prayer, that it has so frequently been found a means, in the hand of God, of confirming and increasing, not one virtue, not chastity only (as some have idly imagined, without any ground either from Scripture, reason, or experience), but also seriousness of spirit, earnestness, sensibility and tenderness of conscience, deadness to the world, and consequently the love of God, and every holy and heavenly affection.

7. Not that there is any natural or necessary connexion between fasting, and the blessings God conveys thereby. But He will have mercy *as* He will have mercy; He will convey whatsoever seemeth Him good by whatsoever means He is pleased to appoint. And He hath, in all ages, appointed this to be a means of averting His wrath, and obtaining whatever blessings we, from time to time, stand in need of.

How powerful a means this is to avert the wrath of God, we may learn from the remarkable instance of Ahab. 'There was none like him who did sell himself'—wholly give himself up, like a slave bought with money—'to work wickedness.' Yet, when he 'rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and went softly, the word of the Lord came to Elijah, saying, Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before Me? Because he humbleth himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days.'

It was for this end, to avert the wrath of God, that Daniel

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6. 'Rap' means to snatch up and carry away. See 2 Cor. xii. 2, where the third heaven means the heaven where God dwells. The

Mystics made great use of fasting as a preparation for the absorption for the time in God, which was their supreme aim.

sought God 'with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes.' This appears from the whole tenor of his prayer, particularly from the solemn conclusion of it 'O Lord, according to all Thy righteousness,' or mercies, 'let Thy anger be turned away from Thy holy mountain. Hear the prayer of Thy servant, and cause Thy face to shine upon Thy sanctuary that is desolate. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive, O Lord, hearken and do, for Thine own sake' (Dan. ix. 3, 16, &c.).

8. But it is not only from the people of God that we learn, when His anger is moved, to seek Him by fasting and prayer, but even from the Heathens. When Jonah had declared, 'Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown,' the people of Nineveh 'proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them unto the least. For the king of Nineveh arose from his throne, and laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything: let them not feed, nor drink water' (not that the beasts had sinned, or could repent; but that, by their example, man might be admonished, considering that, for his sin, the anger of God was hanging over all creatures): 'who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?' And their labour was not in vain. The fierce anger of God was turned away from them. 'God saw their works' (the fruits of that repentance and faith which He had wrought in them by His prophet), 'and God repented of the evil, that He had said He would do unto them, and He did it not,' (Jonah iii. 4, &c.).

9. And it is a means not only of turning away the wrath of God, but also of obtaining whatever blessings we stand in need of. So, when the other tribes were smitten before the Benjamites, 'all the children of Israel went up unto the house of God, and wept, and fasted that day until even'; and then

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7. There is no justification for the alternative rendering 'or mercies.' The appeal of Daniel is to the righteousness of God. 'He is faithful

and *just* to forgive us our sins.'

8. Both in Egypt and Assyria fasting as an expiation for sin was recognized and practised.



the Lord said, 'Go up' again, 'for to-morrow I will deliver them into thine hand' (Judges xx. 26, &c.). So Samuel gathered all Israel together, when they were in bondage to the Philistines, 'and they fasted on that day' before the Lord and when 'the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel, the Lord thundered' upon them 'with a great thunder, and discomfited them, and they were smitten before Israel' (1 Sam. vii. 6). So Ezra: 'I proclaimed a fast at the river Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of Him a right way for us, and for our little ones; and He was entreated of us' (viii. 21). So Nehemiah 'I fasted and prayed before the God of heaven, and said, Prosper, I pray Thee, Thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man' and God granted him mercy in the sight of the king (i. 4-11).

10. In like manner, the Apostles always joined fasting with prayer when they desired the blessing of God on any important undertaking. Thus we read (Acts xiii.), 'There were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers: as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted,' doubtless for direction in this very affair, 'the Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had' a second time 'fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away' (verses 1-3).

Thus also Paul and Barnabas themselves, as we read in the following chapter, when they 'returned again to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, commended them to the Lord' (Acts xiv. 23).

10. 'Always': this is a rash generalization from the two cases quoted, the only two on record. There is no reason to doubt, however, that fasting and prayer were used in conjunction on such solemn and important occasions.

In Matt. xvii. 21 the whole verse is without any good authority, and

is manifestly interpolated from Mark ix. 29, where the words 'and fasting' are a Western interpolation, and are no part of the original text. Fasting has been similarly interpolated in 1 Cor. vii. 5. No argument can therefore be based on these texts.

Yea, that blessings are to be obtained in the use of this means, which are not otherwise attainable, our Lord expressly declares in His answer to His disciples, asking, 'Why could not we cast him out? Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind' of devils 'goeth not out but by prayer and fasting' (Matt. xvii. 19, &c.),—these being the appointed means of attaining that faith whereby the very devils are subject unto you.

II. These were the appointed means: for it was not merely by the light of reason, or of natural conscience, as it is called, that the people of God have been, in all ages, directed to use fasting as a means to these ends; but they have been, from time to time, taught it of God Himself, by clear and open revelations of His will. Such is that remarkable one by the Prophet Joel: 'Therefore saith the Lord, Turn ye to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; who knoweth if He will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind Him? Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly, then will the Lord be jealous for His land, and pity His people. Yea, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen' (Joel ii. 12, &c.).

Nor are they only temporal blessings which God directs His people to expect in the use of these means. For, at the same time that He promised to those who should seek Him with fasting, and weeping, and mourning, 'I will restore to you the years which the locust hath eaten, the canker-worm, and the caterpillar, and the palmer-worm, My great army,' He subjoins, 'So shall ye eat and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God. Ye shall also know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God.' And then immediately follows the great gospel promise 'I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream

dreams, and your young men shall see visions : and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out My Spirit.'

12. Now whatsoever reasons there were to quicken those of old, in the zealous and constant discharge of this duty, they are of equal force still to quicken us. But above all these, we have a peculiar reason for being 'in fastings often', namely, the command of Him by whose name we are called. He does not, indeed, in this place expressly enjoin either fasting, giving of alms, or prayer, but His directions *how* to fast, to give alms, and to pray, are of the same force with such injunctions. For the commanding us to do anything *thus*, is an unquestionable command to do that thing, seeing it is impossible to perform it *thus*, if it be not performed at all. Consequently, the saying, 'Give alms, pray, fast,' *in such a manner*, is a clear command to perform all those duties; as well as to perform them in that *manner* which shall in no wise lose its reward.

And this is a still farther motive and encouragement to the performance of this duty, even the promise which our

12. It is hardly correct to say that our Lord's directions about fasting are a clear command to fast. He knew that His hearers were in the habit of fasting; and, assuming that they did so, He shows them how to perform this duty to profit. It was no part of His design to interfere unnecessarily with their methods of devotion, although they might not be destined to be permanent in the kingdom of God. 'If you do fast,' He means, 'avoid all ostentation and display'; but this is not the same thing as a command to fast; it is rather permissive than jussive.

It is plain that there is little authority for fasting in the New Testament. It is nowhere definitely prescribed. Our Lord and His disciples did not fast, though He predicted that they would fast when

the bridegroom was taken away from them; but He is thinking of their fasting for sorrow because of His departure, not of fasting as a means of grace. His own fast of forty days is quite exceptional, and was the natural result of His retirement to the wilderness, and His absorption in the problem of His mission. The two examples of fasting and prayer by the Apostles were natural to men trained as they were in Judaism. St. Paul's 'often fastings' were due to circumstances, like his shipwreck, in which food was not procurable. In the three remaining passages (Mark ix. 29, 1 Cor. vii. 5, and Acts x. 30) the word 'fasting' is interpolated, and is not in the original text. These, and the passage now under consideration, are the only ones in the N.T. in

Lord has graciously annexed to the due discharge of it : ' Thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.' Such are the plain grounds, reasons, and ends of fasting , such our encouragement to persevere therein, notwithstanding abundance of objections which men, wiser than their Lord, have been continually raising against it.

III. 1. The most plausible of these I come now to consider. And, first, it has been frequently said, ' Let a Christian fast from sin, and not from food : this is what God requires at his hands.' So He does , but He requires the other also. Therefore this ought to be done, and that not left undone.

View your argument in its full dimensions ; and you will easily judge of the strength of it —

If a Christian ought to abstain from sin, then he ought not to abstain from food :

But a Christian ought to abstain from sin :

Therefore he ought not to abstain from food.

That a Christian ought to abstain from sin, is most true , but how does it follow from hence that he ought not to abstain from food ? Yea, let him do both the one and the other. Let him, by the grace of God, always abstain from sin , and let him often abstain from food, for such reasons and ends as experience and Scripture plainly show to be answered thereby.

2. ' But is it not better ' (as it has, secondly, been objected) ' to abstain from pride and vanity, from foolish and hurtful desires, from peevishness, and anger, and discontent, than from food ? ' Without question, it is. But here again we have need to remind you of our Lord's words : ' These things ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.' And, indeed, the latter is only in order to the former , it is a means to that great end. We abstain from food with this view,—that, by the grace of God conveyed into our souls

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which fasting is as much as mentioned. So that every Christian man is fully entitled to use his own judgement in the matter. He is free to fast, if he feels himself

prompted to do so, and finds the practice profitable. And if he does, he will find the counsels of the fourth section of this sermon an admirable guide.

through this outward means, in conjunction with all the other channels of His grace which He hath appointed, we may be enabled to abstain from every passion and temper which is not pleasing in His sight. We refrain from the one, that, being endued with power from on high, we may be able to refrain from the other. So that your argument proves just the contrary to what you designed. It proves that we ought to fast. For if we ought to abstain from evil tempers and desires, then we ought thus to abstain from food ; since these little instances of self-denial are the ways God hath chose, wherein to bestow that great salvation.

3. ' But we do not find it so in fact ' (this is a third objection) ' we have fasted much and often ; but what did it avail ? We were not a whit better, we found no blessing therein. Nay, we have found it an hindrance rather than an help. Instead of preventing anger, for instance, or fretfulness, it has been a means of increasing them to such a height, that we could neither bear others nor ourselves.' This may very possibly be the case. It is possible either to fast or pray in such a manner as to make you much worse than before ; more unhappy, and more unholy. Yet the fault does not lie in the means itself, but in the manner of using it. Use it still, but use it in a different manner. Do what God commands *as* He commands it, and then, doubtless, His promise shall not fail : His blessing shall be withheld no longer, but, when thou fastest in secret, ' He that seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.'

4. ' But is it not mere superstition ' (so it has been, fourthly, objected), ' to imagine that God regards such little things as these ? ' If you say it is, you condemn all the generations of God's children. But will you say, These were all weak, superstitious men ? Can you be so hardy as to affirm this, both of Moses and Joshua, of Samuel and David, of Jehoshaphat, Ezra, Nehemiah, and all the prophets ? yea, of a greater than all,—the Son of God Himself ? It is certain, both our Master, and all these His servants, did imagine that fasting is not a little thing, and that He who is higher than the highest doth regard it. Of the same judgement, it is plain,

were all His Apostles, 'after they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and with wisdom.' When they had the 'unction of the Holy One, teaching them all things,' they still approved themselves the ministers of God, 'by fastings,' as well as 'by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.' After 'the bridegroom was taken from them, then did they fast in those days.' Nor would they attempt anything (as we have seen above) wherein the glory of God was nearly concerned, such as the sending forth labourers into the harvest, without solemn fasting as well as prayer.

5. 'But if fasting be indeed of so great importance, and attended with such a blessing, is it not best,' say some, fifthly, 'to fast always? not to do it now and then, but to keep a continual fast? to use as much abstinence, at all times, as our bodily strength will bear?' Let none be discouraged from doing this. By all means use as little and plain food, exercise as much self-denial herein, at all times, as your bodily strength will bear. And this may conduce, by the blessing of God, to several of the great ends above mentioned. It may be a considerable help, not only to chastity, but also to heavenly-mindedness; to the weaning your affections from things below, and setting them on things above. But this is not fasting, scriptural fasting, it is never termed so in all the Bible. It, in some measure, answers some of the ends thereof; but still it is another thing. Practise it by all means; but not so as thereby to set aside a command of God, and an instituted means of averting His judgements, and obtaining the blessings of His children.

6. Use continually then as much abstinence as you please; which, taken thus, is no other than Christian temperance; but this need not at all interfere with your observing solemn times of fasting and prayer. For instance: your habitual abstinence or temperance would not prevent your fasting in secret, if you were suddenly overwhelmed with huge sorrow and remorse, and with horrible fear and dismay. Such a situation of mind would almost constrain you to fast: you would loathe your daily food; you would scarce endure even to take such supplies as were needful for the body, till God

‘lifted you up out of the horrible pit, and set your feet upon a rock, and ordered your goings.’ The same would be the case, if you were in agony of desire, vehemently wrestling with God for His blessing. You would need none to instruct you not to eat bread till you had obtained the request of your lips.

7. Again had you been at Nineveh when it was proclaimed throughout the city, ‘Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; let them not feed or drink water, but let them cry mightily unto God’, would your continual fast have been any reason for not bearing part in that general humiliation? Doubtless it would not. You would have been as much concerned as any other not to taste food on that day.

No more would abstinence, or the observing a continual fast, have excused any of the children of Israel from fasting on the tenth day of the seventh month, the great annual day of atonement. There was no exception for these in that solemn decree, ‘Whatsoever soul it be, that shall not be afflicted,’ shall not fast, ‘in that day, he shall be cut off from among his people.’

Lastly, had you been with the brethren in Antioch, at the time when they fasted and prayed, before the sending forth of Barnabas and Saul, can you possibly imagine that your temperance or abstinence would have been a sufficient cause for not joining therein? Without doubt, if you had not, you would soon have been cut off from the Christian community. You would have deservedly been cast out from among them, as bringing confusion into the church of God.

IV 1. I am, in the last place, to show, in what manner we are to fast, that it may be an acceptable service unto the Lord. And, first, let it be done unto the Lord, with our eye singly fixed on Him. Let our intention herein be this, and this alone, to glorify our Father which is in heaven; to express our sorrow and shame for our manifold transgressions of His holy law; to wait for an increase of purifying grace, drawing our affections to things above; to add seriousness and earnestness

to our prayers, to avert the wrath of God; and to obtain all the great and precious promises which He hath made to us in Jesus Christ.

Let us beware of mocking God, of turning our fast, as well as our prayers, into an abomination unto the Lord, by the mixture of any temporal view, particularly by seeking the praise of men. Against this our blessed Lord more peculiarly guards us in the words of the text. 'Moreover, when ye fast, be ye not as the hypocrites'—such were too many who were called the people of God; 'of a sad countenance', sour, affectedly sad, putting their looks into a peculiar form. 'For they disfigure their faces,' not only by unnatural distortions, but also by covering them with dust and ashes; 'that they may appear unto men to fast', this is their chief, if not only, design. 'Verily I say unto you, they have their reward', even the admiration and praise of men. 'But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head and wash thy face': do as thou art accustomed to do at other times; 'that thou appear not unto men to fast': let this be no part of thy intention, if they know it without any design of thine, it matters not, thou art neither the better nor the worse, 'but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.'

2. But, if we desire this reward, let us beware, secondly, of fancying we *merit* anything of God by our fasting. We cannot be too often warned of this, inasmuch as a desire to 'establish our own righteousness,' to procure salvation of debt and not of grace, is so deeply rooted in all our hearts. Fasting is only a way which God hath ordained, wherein we wait for His unmerited mercy, and wherein, without any desert of ours, He hath promised freely to give us His blessing.

3. Not that we are to imagine, the performing the bare outward act will receive any blessing from God. 'Is it such a fast that I have chosen, saith the Lord, a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him?' Are these outward acts, however strictly performed, all that is meant by a man's 'afflicting his soul'? 'Wilt thou call this a fast,



and an acceptable day to the Lord ? ' No, surely if it be a mere external service, it is all but lost labour. Such a performance may possibly afflict the body, but, as to the soul, it profiteth nothing.

4. Yea, the body may sometimes be afflicted too much, so as to be unfit for the works of our calling. This also we are diligently to guard against, for we ought to preserve our health, as a good gift of God. Therefore care is to be taken, whenever we fast, to proportion the fast to our strength. For we may not offer God murder for sacrifice, or destroy our bodies to help our souls.

But at these solemn seasons, we may, even in great weakness of body, avoid that other extreme, for which God condemns those who of old expostulated with Him for not accepting their fasts. ' Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and Thou seest not ? . Behold, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, saith the Lord.' If we cannot wholly abstain from food, we may, at least, abstain from pleasant food ; and then we shall not seek His face in vain.

5. But let us take care to afflict our souls as well as our bodies. Let every season, either of public or private fasting, be a season of exercising all those holy affections which are implied in a broken and contrite heart. Let it be a season of devout mourning, of godly sorrow for sin, such a sorrow as that of the Corinthians, concerning which the Apostle saith, ' I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance. For ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow,' *ἡ κατὰ Θεὸν λύπη*—the sorrow which is according to God, which is a precious gift of His Spirit, lifting the soul to God from whom it flows—' worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of.' Yea, and let our sorrowing after a godly sort work in us the same inward and outward *repentance* ; the same entire change of heart, renewed after

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IV. 5. The passage quoted should be rendered, ' Abstain from every kind of evil,' not ' from all appearance of evil '—an advice which would often hinder the Christian from many forms of good work.

the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness ; and the same change of life, till we are holy as He is holy, in all manner of conversation. Let it work in us the same *carefulness* to be found in Him, without spot and blameless ; the same *clearing of ourselves*, by our lives rather than words, by our abstaining from all appearance of evil , the same *indignation*, vehement abhorrence of every sin ; the same *fear* of our own deceitful hearts ; the same *desire* to be in all things conformed to the holy and acceptable will of God ; the same *zeal* for whatever may be a means of His glory, and of our growth in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ ; and the same *revenge* against Satan and all his works, against all filthiness both of flesh and spirit (2 Cor. vii. 9, &c.).

6. And with fasting let us always join fervent prayer, pouring out our whole souls before God, confessing our sins with all their aggravations, humbling ourselves under His mighty hand, laying open before Him all our wants, all our guiltiness and helplessness. This is a season for enlarging our prayers, both in behalf of ourselves and of our brethren. Let us now bewail the sins of our people ; and cry aloud for the city of our God, that the Lord may build up Zion, and cause His face to shine on her desolations. Thus, we may observe, the men of God, in ancient times, always joined prayer and fasting together , thus the Apostles, in all the instances cited above , and thus our Lord joins them in the discourse before us.

7. It remains only, in order to our observing such a fast as is acceptable to the Lord, that we add alms thereto ; works of mercy, after our power, both to the bodies and souls of men ‘ With such sacrifices ’ also ‘ God is well pleased.’ Thus the angel declares to Cornelius, fasting and praying in his house, ‘ Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God ’ (Acts x. 4, &c.). And thus God Himself expressly and largely declares ‘ Is not this the fast that I have chosen ? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke ? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house ?

when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him , and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh ? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily : and thy righteousness shall go before thee , the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer thou shalt cry, and He shall say, Here I am. If, when thou fastest, ' thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul ; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day. And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones : and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not ' (Isa. lviii. 6, &c.).

## SERMON XXIII

### UPON OUR LORD'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT

#### DISCOURSE VIII

THIS sermon was begun on Thursday, January 29, 1736, whilst Wesley was on his voyage to Georgia, in the midst of a violent thunderstorm, and was finished in the course of the next few days (*Journal*, Standard Edition, i. 144). It is based on chaps. iv and vi of Law's *Serious Call*, from which it has some long quotations. I find in the sermon-register that Wesley preached from verse 20 at the Foundery on November 9, 1760; and from verse 22 at Epworth on August 2, and at the Foundery on November 11 of the next year. He returned to the same subject towards the close of his life in the sermons on *The Single Eye* (No. CXVIII) written at Bristol on September 25, 1789, and on *Worldly Folly* (No. CXIX), written at Balham on February 19, 1790. In the first of these he refers both to Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living* and to Law's *Serious Call*, which he characterizes as 'a treatise which will hardly be excelled, if it be equalled, in the English tongue, either for beauty of expression or for justness and depth of thought.' It is good to find that his quarrel with Law had not blotted from his memory the blessing he had received from his works in the earlier stages of his religious development. Sermons XLIV (*The Use of Money*) and LI (*The Good Steward*) should be read along with this discourse, as representing Wesley's more mature thoughts on the right attitude of the Christian towards worldly wealth.

Neither Wesley nor Law quite realized the direct bearing of the saying about the single eye on the earlier verses of the passage. They both take the phrase to indicate purity of intention, the fixing of the eye of the soul entirely upon God. But in Jewish usage an evil eye means specifically niggardliness, and a good or sound eye liberality. Thus Deut. xv. 9: 'Beware lest thine eye be evil against thy poor brother and thou give him nought; Prov. xxiii. 6: 'Eat not thou the bread of him that hath an evil eye for, Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee'; Prov. xxviii. 22: 'He that hath an evil eye hasteth after riches'; Prov. xxii. 9: 'He that hath a good eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor'; Eccles. xiv. 10: 'An evil eye is grudgling of bread, and he is

miserly at his table.' A good or sound eye is therefore an eye that looks generously upon the poor; and the phrase 'Let thine eye be single' is in direct antithesis to the hoarding-up of treasures upon earth. The eye is thought of as the channel through which light comes into the body; if it is ἀπλούς, i.e. healthy, the light comes in freely; but if it is diseased, the light is obstructed. So if a man is generous, the light of God comes into his soul; he knows God through sympathy with God's own goodness; but if he is mean and miserly, he shuts God out of his heart, and he becomes ever darker and darker in his spiritual conceptions. One feels sorry to interfere with an interpretation which has been so common, and which has given to the phrase 'a single eye' such a well-understood meaning in devotional literature; but truth must prevail.

In regard to verses 19 and 20, two things must be observed: First, that we have here an example of the common Hebrew idiom of exaggerated antithesis. When two things are to be compared, instead of saying 'This is preferable to that,' Hebrew rhetoric says, 'That is bad and this is good'; or if two courses of action are in question, instead of saying, 'Do this rather than that,' it says, 'Do not do that, but do this.' Thus Jeremiah (vii. 22) says, 'I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices; but this thing I commanded them, saying, Hearken unto my voice, and I will be your God,' i.e. obedience is better than sacrifice (cf. Isa. i. 10-17). In Luke xiv. 26 our Lord says, 'If any man cometh unto Me, and hateth not his own father and mother he cannot be My disciple'; in Matt. x. 37 the saying is given without the rhetorical figure, 'He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me.' So in Rom. ix. 13: 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.' In Luke xiv. 12 our Lord says, 'When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, but bid the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind.' This is not a prohibition of friendly mutual entertainments, but means that it is better to entertain the poor than to make feasts for one's friends. Matt. x. 20: 'It is not ye who speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.' So here we have not an absolute prohibition of saving money; the meaning is that it is better to lay up treasure in heaven by giving to the poor than to hoard money for oneself.

Second, the profound difference between the economic conditions of our Lord's time and those under which we live must not be forgotten. In those days practically the only way in which the peasants in our Lord's congregation could save money or jewellery was by burying it in the ground, like the unprofitable servant in the parable, where it would be liable to be corroded and spoilt; or by concealing it in their houses, where it might easily be stolen. There was no method by

which money could be at once saved for the owner's future use, and meantime employed in productive service. Nowadays, through savings banks and building societies and insurance companies, a poor man can invest his savings, so that they will be available for himself and his family in time of sickness or old age, and in the meantime will become part of the working capital of the community and be used in productive activities. And his money will do far more good in that way than if he gave the few shillings of his monthly savings to the poor directly. Similarly, the man who is making large profits in his business benefits the poor far more by increasing his business, and so finding employment for them, than by indiscriminate charity. There will always be plenty of opportunity for generous giving to the sick and the aged and the unfortunate as well ; but the best use of wealth is to employ it in finding remunerative work for those who want it. The motive is everything. What our Lord does positively forbid is the engaging in business solely for the sake of making money for oneself ; and the spending of our profits in selfish and extravagant indulgences, or hoarding them for the sake of ultimately possessing a great fortune.

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*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal :  
But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal :  
For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.  
The light of the body is the eye : if therefore thine eye be single thy whole body shall be full of light.  
But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness !—MATT. vi. 19–23.*

I. FROM those which are commonly termed religious actions, and which are real branches of true religion, where they spring from a pure and holy intention, and are performed in a manner suitable thereto, our Lord proceeds to the actions of common life, and shows that the same purity of intention is as indispensably required in our ordinary business, as in giving alms, or fasting, or prayer.

And without question, the same purity of intention, ' which makes our alms and devotions acceptable, must also make our

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Par. 1. The quotation is from a few verbal alterations. Wesley Law's *Serious Call*, ch. iv, p. 51, with was not as conscientiously exact in

labour or employment a proper offering to God. If a man pursues his business, that he may raise himself to a state of figure and riches in the world, he is no longer serving God in his employment, and has no more title to a reward from God, than he who gives alms that he may be seen, or prays that he may be heard, of men. For vain and earthly designs are no more allowable in our employments, than in our alms and devotions. They are not only evil when they mix with our good works,' with our religious actions, 'but they have the same evil nature when they enter into the common business of our employments. If it were allowable to pursue them in our worldly employments, it would be allowable to pursue them in our devotions. But as our alms and devotions are not an acceptable service but when they proceed from a pure intention, so our common employment cannot be reckoned a service to Him but when it is performed with the same piety of heart.'

2. This our blessed Lord declares in the liveliest manner, in those strong and comprehensive words, which He explains, enforces, and enlarges upon, throughout this whole chapter: 'The light of the body is the eye if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.' The eye is the intention what the eye is to the body, the intention is to the soul. As the one guides all the motions of the body, so does the other those of the soul. This eye of the soul is then said to be single, when it looks at one thing only; when we have no other design, but to 'know God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent'—to know Him with suitable affections, loving Him as He hath loved us, to please God in all things; to serve God (as we love Him) with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength; and to enjoy God in all, and above all things, in time and in eternity.

his quotations as he demanded that others should be in quoting his hymns. In this short passage there are seven words altered to others, and over thirty omitted.

2. As we have seen, this interpre-

tation of 'the single eye' cannot be maintained. The word translated 'single' means 'sound,' 'uncomplicated by disease'; and then 'bountiful.' It does not mean 'looking at one thing only.'

3. 'If thine eye be' thus 'single,' thus fixed on God, 'thy whole body shall be full of light.' 'Thy whole body':—all that is guided by the intention, as the body is by the eye: all thou art, all thou doest, thy desires, tempers, affections, thy thoughts, and words, and actions. The whole of these 'shall be full of light'; full of true, divine knowledge. This is the first thing we may here understand by light. 'In His light thou shalt see light.' 'He which of old commanded light to shine out of darkness, shall shine in thy heart': He shall enlighten the eyes of thy understanding with the knowledge of the glory of God. His Spirit shall reveal unto thee the deep things of God. The inspiration of the Holy One shall give thee understanding, and cause thee to know wisdom secretly. Yea, the anointing which thou receivest of Him 'shall abide in thee, and teach thee of all things.'

How does experience confirm this! Even after God hath opened the eyes of our understanding, if we seek or desire anything else than God, how soon is our foolish heart darkened! Then clouds again rest upon our souls. Doubts and fears again overwhelm us. We are tossed to and fro, and know not what to do, or which is the path wherein we should go. But when we desire and seek nothing but God, clouds and doubts vanish away. We who 'were sometimes darkness are now light in the Lord.' The night now shineth as the day; and we find 'the path of the upright is light.' God showeth us the path wherein we should go, and maketh plain the way before our face.

4. The second thing which we may here understand by light, is holiness. While thou seekest God in all things, thou shalt find Him in all—the fountain of all holiness continually filling thee with His own likeness, with justice, mercy, and truth. While thou lookest unto Jesus, and Him alone, thou shalt be filled with the mind that was in Him. Thy soul shall be renewed day by day, after the image of Him that created it. If the eye of thy mind be not removed from Him, if thou endurest 'seeing Him that is invisible,' and seeking nothing else in heaven or earth, then as thou beholdest the glory of the Lord, thou shalt be transformed 'into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord.'



And it is also matter of daily experience, that 'by grace we are' thus 'saved through faith.' It is by faith that the eye of the mind is opened, to see the light of the glorious love of God: and as long as it is steadily fixed thereon, on God in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, we are more and more filled with the love of God and man; with meekness, gentleness, long-suffering, with all the fruits of holiness which are through Christ Jesus, to the glory of God the Father.

5. This light which fills him who has a single eye implies, thirdly, happiness, as well as holiness. Surely 'light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is to see the sun.' But how much more, to see the Sun of Righteousness continually shining upon the soul! And if there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any peace that passeth all understanding, if any rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, they all belong to him whose eye is single. Thus is his 'whole body full of light.' He walketh in the light as God is in the light, rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in everything giving thanks, enjoying whatever is the will of God concerning him in Christ Jesus.

6. 'But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.' 'If thine eye be evil': we see there is no medium between a single and an evil eye. If the eye be not single, then it is evil. If the intention, in whatever we do, be not singly to God, if we seek anything else, then our mind and conscience are defiled.

Our eye therefore is evil, if, in anything we do, we aim at any other end than God, if we have any view, but to know and to love God, to please and serve Him in all things; if we have any other design than to enjoy God, to be happy in Him both now and for ever.

7. If thine eye be not singly fixed on God, 'thy whole body shall be full of darkness.' The veil shall still remain on thy heart. Thy mind shall be more and more blinded by 'the god of this world,' 'lest the light of the glorious gospel

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6. 'Evil' means primarily 'diseased,' and then, according to Hebrew usage, 'niggardly.'

of Christ should shine upon thee.' Thou wilt be full of ignorance and error touching the things of God, not being able to receive or discern them. And even when thou hast some desire to serve God, thou wilt be full of uncertainty as to the manner of serving Him, finding doubts and difficulties on every side, and not seeing any way to escape.

Yea, if thine eye be not single, if thou seek any of the things of earth, thou shalt be full of ungodliness and unrighteousness; thy desires, tempers, affections, being all out of course; being all dark, and vile, and vain. And thy conversation will be evil, as well as thy heart, not 'seasoned with salt,' or 'meet to minister grace unto the hearers'; but idle, unprofitable, corrupt, grievous to the Holy Spirit of God.

8. Both destruction and unhappiness are in thy ways, 'for the way of peace hast thou not known.' There is no peace, no settled, solid peace, for them that know not God. There is no true nor lasting content for any who do not seek Him with their whole heart. While thou aimest at any of the things that perish, 'all that cometh is vanity', yea, not only vanity, but 'vexation of spirit', and that both in the pursuit and the enjoyment also. Thou walkest indeed in a vain shadow, and disquietest thyself in vain. Thou walkest in darkness that may be felt. Sleep on, but thou canst not take thy rest. The dreams of life can give pain, and that thou knowest: but ease they cannot give. There is no rest in this world or the world to come, but only in God, the centre of spirits.

'If the light which is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!' If the intention, which ought to enlighten the whole soul, to fill it with knowledge, and love, and peace, and which in fact does, so long as it is single, as long as it aims at God alone,—if this be darkness; if it aim at anything beside God, and consequently cover the soul with darkness instead of light, with ignorance and error, with sin and misery,

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8. The correct rendering is 'how great is *the* [not *that*] darkness!'

'Essential night': absolute night. Probably Wesley was thinking of

Milton's 'Chaos and eternal night' described in the second book of *Paradise Lost*.

O how great is that darkness ! It is the very smoke which ascends out of the bottomless pit ! It is the essential night which reigns in the lowest deep, in the land of the shadow of death !

9. Therefore, 'lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal.' If you do, it is plain your eye is evil, it is not singly fixed on God.

With regard to most of the commandments of God, whether relating to the heart or life, the Heathens of Africa or America stand much on a level with those that are called Christians. The Christians observe them (a few only being excepted) very near as much as the Heathens. For instance: the generality of the natives of England, commonly called Christians, are as sober and as temperate as the generality of the Heathens near the Cape of Good Hope. And so the Dutch or French Christians are as humble and as chaste as the Choctaw or Cherokee Indians. It is not easy to say, when we compare the bulk of the nations in Europe with those in America, whether the superiority lies on the one side or the other. At least, the American has not much the advantage. But we cannot affirm this with regard to the command now before us. Here the Heathen has far the pre-eminence. He desires and seeks nothing more than plain food to eat, and plain raiment to put on ; and he seeks this only from day to day he reserves, he lays up nothing, unless it be as much

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9. Note the bitter irony of this whole section. By the Africans Wesley means the Hottentots and Kaffirs in Cape Colony. 'Dutch or French Christians are the German and French settlers in Georgia and Louisiana.' The Americans are the aboriginal Indians of North America, to whom Wesley was on his way as a missionary. He tried to get to the Choctaws in June 1736, but Oglethorpe refused to give him leave. He describes them as 'the

least polished, that is, the least corrupted, of all the Indian nations.' They lived at this time in Alabama and Mississippi, eight or nine hundred miles west of Savannah. They were allied with the French of Louisiana for some time, but ultimately came into friendly relations with the English. There are still some 20,000 of them, but they are settled to the west of their old home. The Cherokees were settled in Georgia and Alabama, three or four hundred miles

corn at one season of the year as he will need before that season returns. This command, therefore, the Heathens, though they know it not, do constantly and punctually observe. They 'lay up for themselves no treasures upon earth', no stores of purple or fine linen, of gold or silver, which either 'moth or rust may corrupt, or thieves break through and steal.' But how do the Christians observe what they profess to receive as a command of the most high God? Not at all, not in any degree, no more than if no such command had ever been given to man. Even the good Christians, as they are accounted by others as well as themselves, pay no manner of regard thereto. It might as well be still hid in its original Greek, for any notice they take of it. In what Christian city do you find one man of five hundred, who makes the least scruple of laying up just as much treasure as he can—of increasing his goods just as far as he is able? There are, indeed, those who would not do this unjustly: there are many who will neither rob nor steal, and some who will not defraud their neighbour, nay, who will not gain either by his ignorance or necessity. But this is quite another point. Even these do not scruple the thing, but the manner of it. They do not scruple the 'laying up treasures upon earth', but the laying them up by dishonesty. They do not start at disobeying Christ, but at a breach of heathen morality. So that even these honest men do no more obey this command than a highwayman or a house-breaker. Nay, they never designed to obey it. From their youth up, it never entered into their

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west of Savannah. Wesley describes them as temperate but covetous—'a vice,' he says, 'scarcely to be found in any Indian but a Cherokee.' There are still some 20,000 of them in the Indian territory of the U.S.A. Evidently Wesley, like many of his contemporaries, was still suffering from the illusion that the Indians were living the simple life of nature, free from all the vices of European civilization. 'The noble Red Man'

was idealized into something very different from the fact. But Wesley soon found him out; and his account of him may be read in the Standard Edition of the *Journal*, i. p. 406-9. 'They are all,' he says, 'except perhaps the Choctaws, gluttons, drunkards, thieves, dissemblers, liars,' with much more to the same effect.

'Start at,' i.e. shrink from.

Highwaymen were common objects of the road in Wesley's time.

thoughts. They were bred up by their Christian parents, masters, and friends, without any instruction at all concerning it, unless it were this,—to break it as soon and as much as they could, and to continue breaking it to their lives' end.

10. There is no one instance of spiritual infatuation in the world which is more amazing than this. Most of these very men read, or hear the Bible read—many of them every Lord's day. They have read or heard these words an hundred times, and yet never suspect that they are themselves condemned thereby, any more than by those which forbid parents to offer up their sons or daughters unto Moloch. O that God would speak to these miserable self-deceivers with His own voice, His mighty voice, that they may at last awake out of the snare of the devil, and the scales may fall from their eyes!

11. Do you ask what it is to 'lay up treasures on earth'? It will be needful to examine this thoroughly. And let us, first, observe what is not forbidden in this command, that we may then clearly discern what is.

We are not forbidden in this command, first, to 'provide things honest in the sight of all men,' to provide wherewith we may render unto all their due, whatsoever they can justly demand of us. So far from it, that we are taught of God to 'owe no man anything.' We ought, therefore, to use all diligence in our calling, in order to owe no man anything, this being no other than a plain law of common justice, which our Lord came 'not to destroy, but to fulfil.'

Neither, secondly, does He here forbid the providing for ourselves such things as are needful for the body, a sufficiency of plain, wholesome food to eat, and clean raiment to put on. Yea, it is our duty, so far as God puts it into our power, to provide these things also, to the end we may eat our own bread, and be burdensome to no man.

Nor yet are we forbidden, thirdly, to provide for our children, and for those of our own household. This also it is our duty

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11. This passage is unfortunately translated, because the word 'honest' has changed its meaning since the A.V. was made. The old meaning is 'honourable'; it did not mean 'paying twenty shillings in the pound.' What St. Paul says is, 'We take thought beforehand for things

to do, even upon principles of heathen morality. Every man ought to provide the plain necessities of life, both for his own wife and children ; and to put them into a capacity of providing these for themselves, when he is gone hence and is no more seen. I say, of providing *these* ; the plain necessities of life ; not delicacies , not superfluities ;—and that by their diligent labour , for it is no man's duty to furnish them, any more than himself, with the means either of luxury or idleness. But if any man provide not thus far for his own children (as well as for the widows of his own house, of whom primarily St. Paul is speaking in those well-known words to Timothy), he hath practically ' denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel,' or Heathen.

Lastly. We are not forbidden, in these words, to lay up, from time to time, what is needful for the carrying on our worldly business, in such a measure and degree as is sufficient to answer the foregoing purposes,—in such a measure as, first, to owe no man anything , secondly, to procure for ourselves the necessities of life ; and, thirdly, to furnish those of our own house with them while we live, and with the means of procuring them when we are gone to God.

12. We may now clearly discern (unless we are unwilling to discern it) what that is which is forbidden here. It is, the designedly procuring more of this world's goods than will answer the foregoing purposes. The labouring after a larger measure of worldly substance, a larger increase of gold and silver—the laying up any more than these ends require—is what is here expressly and absolutely forbidden. If the words have any meaning at all, it must be this ; for they are capable of no other. Consequently, whoever he is that, owing no man anything, and having food and raiment for himself and his household, together with a sufficiency to carry on his worldly business, so far as answers these reasonable purposes ;

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honourable,' i.e. in the matter of the handling of the collection for the saints at Jerusalem.

The passage in 1 Tim. v. 16 runs, ' If any believer, man or woman, have widows,' i.e. members of his

family who are widows, ' let him relieve them.'

12. In Sermon XLIV. section 1, Wesley allows a good deal more than this. He says, ' Gain all you can by honest industry ' ; and urges

whosoever, I say. being already in these circumstances, seeks a still larger portion on earth, he lives in an open, habitual denial of the Lord that bought him. 'He hath' practically 'denied the faith, and is worse than' an African or American 'infidel.'

13. Hear ye this, all ye that dwell in the world, and love the world wherein ye dwell! Ye may be 'highly esteemed of men'; but ye are 'an abomination in the sight of God'! How long shall your souls cleave to the dust? How long will ye load yourselves with thick clay? When will ye awake and see, that the open, speculative Heathens are nearer the kingdom of heaven than you? When will ye be persuaded to choose the better part; that which cannot be taken away from you? When will ye seek only to 'lay up treasures in heaven', renouncing, dreading, abhorring all other? If you aim at 'laying up treasures on earth,' you are not barely losing your time, and spending your strength for that which is not bread; for what is the fruit if you succeed? You have murdered your own soul! You have extinguished the last spark of spiritual life therein! Now indeed, in the midst of life, you are in death! You are a living man, but a dead Christian! 'For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.' Your heart is sunk into the dust; your soul cleaveth to the ground. Your affections are set, not on things above, but on things of the earth; on poor husks, that may poison, but cannot satisfy, an everlasting spirit, made for God. Your love, your joy, your desire, are all placed on the things which perish in the using. You have thrown away the treasure in heaven. God and Christ are lost! You have gained riches and hell-fire!

14. O 'how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!' When our Lord's disciples were astonished at His speaking thus, He was so far from retracting

his hearers to be diligent in business, to learn all they can from experience, and to make the best of all that is in their hands; and then to save all they can by retrenching needless and foolish expenses. But all this is in order that they may give all

they can, after making provision for themselves and their families, as is here specified.

13. 'The open, speculative heathens.' I suppose he means the Greek and Roman philosophers, who are avowedly not Christians.

it, that He repeated the same important truth in stronger terms than before. 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.' How hard is it for them, whose every word is applauded, not to be wise in their own eyes! How hard for them not to think themselves better than the poor, base, uneducated herd of men! How hard not to seek happiness in their riches, or in things dependent upon them; in gratifying the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life! O ye rich, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Only with God all things are possible!

15. And even if you do not succeed, what is the fruit of your endeavouring to lay up treasures on earth? 'They that will be rich,' οἱ βουλόμενοι πλουτεῖν, they that *desire*, that *endeavour* after it, whether they succeed or no, 'fall into temptation and a snare'—a gin, a trap of the devil, 'and into many foolish and hurtful lusts'—ἐπιθυμίας ἀνοήτους, *desires*, with which *reason hath nothing to do*; such as properly belong not to rational and immortal beings, but only to the brute beasts, which have no understanding, 'which drown men in destruction and perdition,' in present and eternal misery. Let us but open our eyes, and we may daily see the melancholy proofs of this—men who, desiring, resolving to be rich, coveting after money, the root of all evil, have already pierced themselves through with many sorrows, and anticipated the hell to which they are going!

The cautiousness with which the Apostle here speaks is highly observable. He does not affirm this absolutely of the rich: for a man may possibly be rich, without any fault of his, by an overruling Providence, preventing his own choice, but he affirms it of οἱ βουλόμενοι πλουτεῖν, *those who desire or seek to be rich*. Riches, dangerous as they are, do not always 'drown men in destruction and perdition'; but the *desire of riches* does. Those who calmly desire, and deliberately seek to attain them, whether they do, in fact, gain the world or no, do infallibly lose their own souls. These are they that sell

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15. 'The root of all evil' should be 'a root of all kinds of evil.'



Him who bought them with His blood, for a few pieces of gold or silver. These enter into a covenant with death and hell; and their covenant shall stand: for they are daily making themselves meet to partake of their inheritance with the devil and his angels.

16. O who shall warn this generation of vipers to flee from the wrath to come! Not those who lie at their gate, or cringe at their feet, desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fall from their tables. Not those who court their favour, or fear their frown, none of those who mind earthly things. But if there be a Christian upon earth, if there be a man who hath overcome the world, who desires nothing but God, and fears none but Him that is able to destroy both body and soul in hell; 'thou, O man of God, speak, and spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet.' Cry aloud, and show these honourable sinners the desperate condition wherein they stand! It may be, one in a thousand may have ears to hear, may arise and shake himself from the dust, may break loose from these chains that bind him to the earth, and at length lay up treasures in heaven.

17. And if it should be, that one of these by the mighty power of God awoke and asked, 'What must I do to be saved?' the answer, according to the oracles of God, is clear, full, and express. God doth not say to thee, 'Sell all that thou hast.' Indeed, He who seeth the hearts of men saw it needful to enjoin this in one peculiar case, that of the young rich ruler. But He never laid it down for a general rule to all rich men, in all succeeding generations. His general direction is, first, 'Be not high-minded.' God seeth not as man seeth. He esteems thee not for thy riches, for thy grandeur or equipage, for any qualification or accomplishment which is directly or indirectly owing to thy wealth, which can be bought or procured thereby. All these are with Him as dung and dross: let them be so with thee also. Beware thou think not thyself to be one jot wiser or better for all these things. Weigh thyself in another balance: estimate thyself only by the measure of faith and love which God hath given thee. If thou hast more of the knowledge and love of God than he, thou art on

this account, and no other, wiser and better, more valuable and honourable, than him who is with the dogs of thy flock. But if thou hast not this treasure, thou art more foolish, more vile, more truly contemptible, I will not say than the lowest servant under thy roof, but than the beggar laid at thy gate full of sores.

18. Secondly. 'Trust not in uncertain riches.' Trust not in them for help and trust not in them for happiness.

First. Trust not in them for help. Thou art miserably mistaken, if thou lookest for this in gold or silver. These are no more able to set thee *above the world*, than to set thee above the devil. Know that both the world, and the prince of this world, laugh at all such preparations against them. These will little avail in the day of trouble; even if they remain in the trying hour. But it is not certain that they will, for how oft do they 'make themselves wings and fly away'! But if not, what support will they afford, even in the ordinary troubles of life? The desire of thy eyes, the wife of thy youth, thy son, thine only son, or the friend which was as thy own soul, is taken away at a stroke. Will thy riches reanimate the breathless clay, or call back its late inhabitant? Will they secure thee from sickness, diseases, pain? Do these visit the poor only? Nay, he that feeds thy flocks, or tills thy ground, has less sickness and pain than thou. He is more rarely visited by these unwelcome guests; and if they come there at all, they are more easily driven away from the little cot, than from 'the cloud-topt palaces.' And during the time that thy body is chastened with pain, or consumes away with pining sickness, how do thy treasures help thee? Let the poor Heathen answer,—

*Ut lippum pictae tabulae, fomenta podagrum,  
Auriculas citharae collectâ sorde dolentes.*

18. 'The cloud-topt palaces.' A reminiscence of Shakespeare, *Tempest*, iv. i. 152: 'The cloud-capt towers, the gorgeous palaces'; perhaps affected by the 'cloud-topt hill' of Pope's *Essay on Man*, i. 100, which had just been published in

1732 and had certainly been read by Wesley.

'The poor heathen' is Horace, for whom Wesley seems to have had a great contempt. The quotation is from his *Epistles*, i. 2. 52. The previous line is needed to complete the

19. But there is at hand a greater trouble than all these. Thou art to die ! Thou art to sink into dust , to return to the ground from which thou wast taken , to mix with common clay. Thy body is to go to the earth as it was, while thy spirit returns to God that gave it. And the time draws on : the years slide away with a swift though silent pace. Perhaps your day is far spent the noon of life is past, and the evening shadows begin to rest upon you. You feel in yourself sure approaching decay. The springs of life wear away apace. Now what help is there in your riches ? Do they sweeten death ? Do they endear that solemn hour ? Quite the reverse. ' O death, how bitter art thou to a man that liveth at rest in his possessions ! ' How unacceptable to him is that awful sentence, ' This night shall thy soul be required of thee ' ! Or will they prevent the unwelcome stroke, or protract the dreadful hour ? Can they deliver your soul, that it should not see death ? Can they restore the years that are past ? Can they add to your appointed time a month, a day, an hour, a moment ? Or will the good things you have chosen for your portion here follow you over the great gulf ? Not so : naked came you into this world , naked must you return.

*Linquenda tellus, et domus, et placens  
Uxor ; neque harum, quas colis, arborum,  
Te, praeter invisam cupressum,  
Ulla brevem dominum sequetur !*

Surely, were not these truths too plain to be observed, because they are too plain to be denied, no man that is to die could possibly trust for help in uncertain riches.

sense : ' Qui cupit aut metuit, juvat illum sic domus et res,' &c.—i.e. ' When a man is under the bondage of desire or fear, his house and his property give him just as much pleasure as pictures to one with sore eyes, or poultices to the martyr to gout, or the music of the lyre to a sufferer from ear-ache ' ; his desire being for more wealth, and his fear lest he should lose what he has.

19. ' O Death, how bitter art thou,' &c. From Eccclus. xli. 1. It runs exactly, ' O Death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee,' &c.

' Linquenda tellus,' &c. (Horace, *Odes*, ii. 14. 21). Gladstone translates it :

Earth, home, and winsome wife, thy fate  
Will have thee leave ; and not one tree  
Of all, save cypress that we hate,  
O, transient lord, shall follow thee.

20. And trust not in them for happiness for here also they will be found 'deceitful upon the weights.' Indeed this every reasonable man may infer from what has been observed already. For if neither thousands of gold and silver, nor any of the advantages or pleasures purchased thereby, can prevent our being miserable, it evidently follows, they cannot make us happy. What happiness can they afford to him who in the midst of all, is constrained to cry out,

To my new courts sad thought does still repair,  
And round my gilded roofs hangs hovering care ?

Indeed experience is here so full, strong, and undeniable, that it makes all other arguments needless. Appeal we therefore to fact. Are the rich and great the only happy men ? And is each of them more or less happy in proportion to his measure of riches ? Are they happy at all ? I had wellnigh said, they are of all men most miserable ! Rich man, for once speak the truth from thy heart ! Speak, both for thyself and for thy brethren !

Amidst our plenty something still,—  
To me, to thee, to him is wanting !  
That cruel something, unpossessed,  
Corrodes and leavens all the rest.

Yea, and so it will, till thy wearisome days of vanity are shut up in the night of death.

Surely, then, to trust in riches for happiness is the greatest folly of all that are under the sun ! Are you not convinced of this ? Is it possible you should still expect to find happiness

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20. 'To my new courts.' From Prior's *Solomon*, ii. 53, published in 1718. Wesley greatly admired his poetry, and quotes him several times in his *Journal*. He wrote an article on him, which is reprinted in his *Works*, vol. xiii. p. 418. He thinks that 'his poetical abilities were at least equal to those either of Pope or Dryden.' And his best poems 'do not yield to anything that has

been wrote either by Pope or Dryden or any English poet, except Milton.' See Bett's *Hymns of Methodism*, pp. 96-102. In the original 'does' is 'did' and 'hangs' is 'hung.'

'Amidst our plenty,' &c. This is from the Moral to Prior's *Ladle*, 162. A line is omitted ; it should be :

Amidst our plenty something still  
For horses, houses, pictures, planting,  
To thee, to me, to him is wanting.

in money, or all it can procure? What! can silver and gold, and eating and drinking, and horses and servants, and glittering apparel, and diversions and pleasures (as they are called) make thee happy? They can as soon make thee immortal!

21. These are all dead show. Regard them not. Trust thou in the living God, so shalt thou be safe under the shadow of the Almighty; His faithfulness and truth shall be thy shield and buckler. He is a very present help in time of trouble; such an help as can never fail. Then shalt thou say, if all thy other friends die, 'The Lord liveth, and blessed be my strong Helper!' He shall remember thee when thou liest sick upon thy bed, when vain is the help of man. When all the things of the earth can give no support, He will 'make all thy bed in thy sickness,' He will sweeten thy pain: the consolations of God shall cause thee to clap thy hands in the flames. And even when this house of earth is wellnigh shaken down, when it is just ready to drop into the dust, He will teach thee to say, 'O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? Thanks be unto God which giveth' me 'the victory, through' my 'Lord Jesus Christ.'

O trust in Him for happiness as well as for help. All the springs of happiness are in Him. Trust 'in Him who giveth us all things richly to enjoy,' *παρέχοντι ἡμῖν πλουσίως πάντα εἰς ἀπόλαυσιν*—who, of His own rich and free mercy, holds them out to us, as in His own hand, that, receiving them as His gifts, and as pledges of His love, we may enjoy all that we possess. It is His love gives a relish to all we taste—puts life and sweetness into all; while every creature leads us up to the great Creator, and all earth is a scale to heaven. He transfuses the joys that are at His own right hand into all He bestows on His thankful children, who, having fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, enjoys Him in all, and above all.

22. Thirdly. Seek not to increase in goods. 'Lay not

21. 'The Lord liveth' (Ps. xviii. 46, Prayer-Book version).

'Scale to heaven,' i.e. a ladder,

probably with a reference to Jacob's dream.

22. But this is corrected in Sermon XLIV, section 1.

up for' thyself 'treasures upon earth.' This is a flat, positive command; full as clear as, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery.' How then is it possible for a rich man to grow richer, without denying the Lord that bought him? Yea, how can any man who has already the necessities of life, gain or aim at more, and be guiltless? 'Lay not up,' saith our Lord, 'treasures upon earth.' If, in spite of this, you do and will lay up money or goods which 'moth or rust may corrupt, or thieves break through and steal'; if you will add house to house, or field to field,—why do you call yourself a Christian? You do not obey Jesus Christ. You do not design it. Why do you name yourself by His name? 'Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord,' saith He Himself, 'and do not the things which I say?'

23. If you ask, 'But what must we do with our goods, seeing we have more than we have occasion to use, if we must not lay them up? Must we throw them away?' I answer, If you threw them into the sea, if you were to cast them into the fire and consume them, they would be better bestowed than they are now. You cannot find so mischievous a manner of throwing them away, as either the laying them up for your posterity, or the laying them out upon yourselves in folly and superfluity. Of all possible methods of throwing them away, these two are the very worst; the most opposite to the gospel of Christ, and the most pernicious to your own soul.

How pernicious to your own soul the latter of these is, has been excellently shown by a late writer —

'If we waste our money, we are not only guilty of wasting a talent which God has given us, but we do ourselves this farther harm, we turn this useful talent into a powerful means of corrupting ourselves; because so far as it is spent wrong, so far it is spent in the support of some wrong temper, in

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23. See Sermon XLIV, i. 2. 'One celebrated writer gravely exhorts his countrymen to throw all their money into the sea. But is not all this mere empty rant? The fault does not lie in the money, but in them that use it. It is full as applicable to the best as to the worst

uses. . In the present state of mankind, it is an excellent gift of God, answering the noblest ends.' And in ii. 1: 'Do not throw the precious talent into the sea; leave that folly to heathen philosophers.' This long extract is from *Law's Serious Call*, cli. vi. pp. 82-4.

gratifying some vain and unreasonable desires, which, as Christians, we are obliged to renounce.

‘As wit and fine parts cannot be only trifled away, but will expose those that have them to greater follies, so money cannot be only trifled away, but, if it is not used according to reason and religion, will make people live a more silly and extravagant life, than they would have done without it: if, therefore, you do not spend your money in doing good to others, you must spend it to the hurt of yourself. You act like one that refuses the cordial to his sick friend, which he cannot drink himself without inflaming his blood. For this is the case of superfluous money if you give it to those that want it, it is a cordial; if you spend it upon yourself, in something that you do not want, it only inflames and disorders your mind.

‘In using riches where they have no real use, nor we any real want, we only use them to our great hurt, in creating unreasonable desires, in nourishing ill tempers, in indulging foolish passions, and supporting a vain turn of mind. For high eating and drinking, fine clothes and fine houses, state and equipage, gay pleasures and diversions, do all of them naturally hurt and disorder our heart. They are the food and nourishment of all the folly and weakness of our nature. They are all of them the support of something that ought not to be supported. They are contrary to that sobriety and piety of heart which relishes divine things. They are so many weights upon our mind, that make us less able and less inclined to raise our thoughts and affections to things above.

‘So that money thus spent is not merely wasted or lost but it is spent to bad purposes and miserable effects; to the corruption and disorder of our hearts; to the making us unable to follow the sublime doctrines of the gospel. It is but like keeping money from the poor, to buy poison for ourselves.’

24. Equally inexcusable are those who lay up what they do not need for any reasonable purposes.—

‘If a man had hands, and eyes, and feet, that he could give to those that wanted them, if he should lock them up

in a chest, instead of giving them to his brethren that were blind and lame, should we not justly reckon him an inhuman wretch? If he should rather choose to amuse himself with hoarding them up, than entitle himself to an eternal reward, by giving them to those that wanted eyes and hands, might we not justly reckon him mad?

'Now, money has very much the nature of eyes and feet. If therefore we lock it up in chests, while the poor and distressed want it for their necessary uses, we are not far from the cruelty of him that chooses rather to hoard up the hands and eyes, than to give them to those that want them. If we choose to lay it up, rather than to entitle ourselves to an eternal reward by disposing of our money well, we are guilty of his madness that rather chooses to lock up eyes and hands, than to make himself for ever blessed by giving them to those that want them.'

25. May not this be another reason why rich men shall so hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven? A vast majority of them are under a curse, under the peculiar curse of God; inasmuch as, in the general tenor of their lives, they are not only robbing God, continually embezzling and wasting their Lord's goods, and, by that very means, corrupting their own souls, but also robbing the poor, the hungry, the naked; wronging the widow and the fatherless; and making themselves accountable for all the want, affliction, and distress which they may but do not remove. Yea, doth not the blood of all those who perish for want of what they either lay up, or lay out needlessly, cry against them from the earth? O what account will they give to Him who is ready to judge both the quick and the dead!

26. The true way of employing what you do not want yourselves, you may, fourthly, learn from those words of our Lord, which are the counterpart of what went before 'Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven; where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal.' Put out whatever thou canst spare, upon better



security than this world can afford. Lay up thy treasures in the bank of heaven, and God shall restore them in that day. 'He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord: and look, what he layeth out, it shall be paid him again.' 'Place that,' saith He, 'unto My account. Howbeit, thou owest Me thine own self besides!'

Give to the poor with a single eye, with an upright heart, and write, 'So much given to God.' For 'inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.'

This is the part of a 'faithful and wise steward'; not to sell either his houses or lands, or principal stock, be it more or less, unless some peculiar circumstance should require it, and not to desire or endeavour to increase it, any more than to squander it away in vanity, but to employ it wholly to those wise and reasonable purposes for which his Lord has lodged it in his hands. The wise steward, after having provided his own household with what is needful for life and godliness, makes himself friends with all that remains, from time to time, of the 'mammon of unrighteousness', that when he fails, they may receive him into everlasting habitations—that whensoever his earthly tabernacle is dissolved, they who were before carried into Abraham's bosom, after having eaten his bread, and worn the fleece of his flock, and praised God for the consolation, may welcome him into paradise, and into 'the house of God, eternal in the heavens.'

27. We 'charge' you, therefore, 'who are rich in this world,' as having authority from our great Lord and Master, ἀγαθοεργεῖν—to be *habitually doing good*, to live in a course of good works. 'Be ye merciful, as your Father which is in heaven is merciful'; who doeth good, and ceaseth not. 'Be ye merciful'—how far? After your power, with all the ability which God giveth. Make this your only measure of doing good; not any beggarly maxims or customs of the world. We 'charge you to be rich in good works'; as you have much, to give plenteously. 'Freely ye have received, freely give', so as to lay up no treasure but in heaven. Be ye 'ready to distribute' to every one, according to his neces-

sity. Disperse abroad, give to the poor; deal your bread to the hungry. Cover the naked with a garment, entertain the stranger, carry or send relief to them that are in prison. Heal the sick; not by miracle, but through the blessing of God upon your seasonable support. Let the blessing of him that was ready to perish, through pining want, come upon thee. Defend the oppressed, plead the cause of the fatherless, and make the widow's heart sing for joy.

28. We exhort you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to be 'willing to communicate', *κοινωνικὸς εἶναι*, to be of the same spirit (though not in the same outward state) with those believers of ancient times, who remained steadfast, *ἐν τῇ κοινωνίᾳ*, in that blessed and holy fellowship, wherein 'none said that anything was his own, but they had all things common.' Be a steward, a faithful and wise steward, of God and of the poor, differing from them in these two circumstances only,—that your wants are first supplied, out of the portion of your Lord's goods which remains in your hands, and, that you have the blessedness of giving. Thus 'lay up for yourselves a good foundation,' not in the world which now is, but rather 'for the time to come, that ye may lay hold on eternal life.' The great foundation indeed of all the blessings of God, whether temporal or eternal, is the Lord Jesus Christ, His righteousness and blood, what He hath done, and what He hath suffered for us. And 'other foundation,' in this sense, 'can no man lay'; no, not an apostle, no, not an angel from heaven. But through His merits, whatever we do in His name is a foundation for a good reward, in the day when 'every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour.' Therefore 'labour' thou, 'not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life.' Therefore

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28. 'To communicate,' i.e. to share their goods with others. The communistic experiment by the early Church in Jerusalem was an economic failure, in spite of its fine motive. As the result of thus dissipating all their capital, the members

were reduced to such poverty that St. Paul had to make a collection for them throughout the Gentile churches. Above, in section 26, Wesley wisely forbids his people to sell their houses or lands or principal stock. It would have been well if the church at Jeru-

‘whatsoever thy hand’ now ‘findeth to do, do it with thy might.’ Therefore let

No fair occasion pass unheeded by ;  
Snatching the golden moments as they fly,  
Thou by few fleeting years ensure eternity !

‘By patient continuance in well-doing, seek’ thou ‘for glory, and honour, and immortality.’ In a constant, zealous performance of all good works, wait thou for that happy hour when the King shall say, ‘I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink I was a stranger, and ye took Me in : naked, and ye clothed Me I was sick, and ye visited Me : I was in prison, and ye came unto Me. Come, ye blessed of My Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!’

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salem had had such a wise counsellor.

‘No fair occasion,’ &c. From a poem by Samuel Wesley, John’s elder brother, on the death of Mr. William Morgan, one of the Oxford

Methodists, lines 19–21. The original runs :

No fair occasion glides unheeded by ;  
Snatching the golden moments as they fly,  
He by few fleeting hours ensures eternity.

## SERMON XXIV

### UPON OUR LORD'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT

#### DISCOURSE IX

THE first sermon preached by Wesley after his ordination was from a part of this text (verse 33). The service was held on September 26, 1725, at the church at South Leigh (see above, p. 263). The present discourse follows much the same lines as this first sermon; and some of the sentences therein are repeated here. But it is much more fully elaborated, especially in the sections on the meaning of God's righteousness. The MS. of this sermon has been preserved, and is in the Colman Collection; a facsimile was issued by the Wesleyan Methodist Book-Room in 1903. Matt. vi. 24 occurs as the text of a sermon on September 12, 1756, at Bishop Bonner's Chapel, an old palace of the Bishops of London not far from the Children's Home in Bonner Road, London; at the Foundery during September of the same year; at Bandon in Ireland on July 12, 1758; at Manchester on April 23, 1759; at Bath on November 3, 1760; and first at Bristol and then at Kingswood on September 21, 1761. This was no doubt based on sections 1 to 13 of this discourse.

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*No man can serve two masters : for either he will hate the one, and love the other ; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*

*Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink ; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment ?*

*Behold the fowls of the air : for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they ?*

*Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature ?*

*And why take ye thought for raiment ? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin :*

*And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.*

*Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith ?*

*Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat ? or, What shall we drink ? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed ?*

*(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek :) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.*

*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness ; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

*Take therefore no thought for the morrow : for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.—MATT. vi. 24-34.*

I. IT is recorded of the nations whom the King of Assyria after he had carried Israel away into captivity, placed in the cities of Samaria, that ‘ they feared the Lord, and serve their own gods.’ ‘ These nations,’ saith the inspired writer ‘ feared the Lord ’, performed an outward service to Him (plain proof that they had a fear of God, though not according to knowledge) ; ‘ and served their graven images, both their children, and their children’s children : as did their fathers, so do they unto this day ’ (2 Kings xvii. 33, &c.).

How nearly does the practice of most modern Christians resemble this of the ancient Heathens ! ‘ They fear the Lord ’, they also perform an outward service to Him, and hereby show they have some fear of God, but they likewise ‘ serve their own gods.’ There are those who ‘ teach them, as there were who taught the Assyrians, ‘ the manner of the God of the land ’, the God whose name the country bears to this day, and who was once worshipped there with an holy worship ‘ Howbeit,’ they do not serve Him alone ; they do not fear Him enough for this but ‘ every nation maketh god of their own every nation in the cities wherein they dwell. ‘ These nations fear the Lord ’, they have not laid aside the outward form of worshipping Him ; but ‘ they serve their graven images,’ silver and gold, the work of men’s hands money, pleasure, and praise, the gods of this world, more than divide their service with the God of Israel. This is the manner both of ‘ their children and their children’s children as did their fathers, so do they unto this day.’

2. But although, speaking in a loose way, after the common manner of men, those poor Heathens were said to ‘ fear the Lord,’ yet we may observe the Holy Ghost immediately

adds, speaking according to the truth and real nature of things, 'They fear not the Lord, neither do after the law and the commandment which the Lord commanded the children of Jacob; with whom the Lord made a covenant, and charged them, saying, Ye shall not fear other gods, nor serve them, but the Lord your God ye shall fear, and He shall deliver you out of the hand of your enemies.'

The same judgement is passed by the unerring Spirit of God, and indeed by all, the eyes of whose understanding He hath opened to discern the things of God, upon these poor Christians, commonly so called. If we speak according to the truth and real nature of things, 'they fear not the Lord, neither do they serve Him.' For they do not 'after the covenant the Lord hath made with them, neither after the law and commandment which He hath commanded them, saying, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve,' 'They serve other gods unto this day.' And 'no man can serve two masters.'

3. How vain is it for any man to aim at this,—to attempt the serving of two masters! Is it not easy to foresee what must be the unavoidable consequence of such an attempt? 'Either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other.' The two parts of this sentence, although separately proposed, are to be understood in connexion with each other; for the latter part is a consequence of the former. He will naturally hold to him whom he loves. He will so cleave to him, as to perform to him a willing, faithful, and diligent service. And, in the meantime, he will so far at least despise the master he hates as to have little regard to his commands, and to obey them, if at all, in a slight and careless manner. Therefore, whatsoever the wise men of the world may suppose, 'ye cannot serve God and mammon.'

4. Mammon was the name of one of the heathen gods,

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Par. 3. The second part of the verse is not so much 'a consequence' of the first, as a reversal of it: 'Either he will hate A and

love B; or else he will hold to A and despise B.'

4. Mammon, or rather Mamon, occurs first in Ecclus. xxxi. 8, 'Blessed

who was supposed to preside over riches. It is here understood of riches themselves, gold and silver, or in general, money, and, by a common figure of speech, of all that may be purchased thereby; such as ease, honour, and sensual pleasure.

But what are we here to understand by serving God, and what by serving mammon?

We cannot serve God, unless we *believe* in Him. This is the only true foundation of serving Him. Therefore, the believing in God, as 'reconciling the world to Himself through Christ Jesus,' the believing in Him, as a loving, pardoning God, is the first great branch of His service.

And thus to believe in God implies, to trust in Him as our strength, without whom we can do nothing, who every moment endues us with power from on high, without which it is impossible to please Him, as our help, our only help in time of trouble, who compasseth us about with songs of deliverance; as our shield, our defender, and the lifter up of our head above all our enemies that are round about us.

It implies, to trust in God as our happiness, as the centre of spirits; the only rest of our souls, the only good who is adequate to all our capacities, and sufficient to satisfy all the desires He hath given us.

It implies (what is nearly allied to the other), to trust in God as our end, to have an eye to Him in all things; to use all things only as means of enjoying Him wheresoever we are, or whatsoever we do, to see Him that is invisible, looking on us well pleased, and to refer all things to Him in Christ Jesus.

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is the rich man who is found blameless, and who has not gone after mamon,' i.e. money. It is found frequently in later Jewish writings; e.g. in Pirke Aboth, ii. 16, 'Let the mamon of thy neighbour be dear to thee as thine own.' It came to be personified; just as we personify Wealth; but there was no god called Mamon. The idea that Mamon was a god originated in mediaeval times, and received currency in Eng-

land from Milton, who in *Paradise Lost*, i. 678, describes him as,

The least erected spirit that fell  
From heaven; for even in heaven his looks and  
thoughts  
Were always downward bent, admiring more  
The riches of heaven's pavement, trodden gold,  
Than aught divine or holy else enjoyed  
In vision beatific.

He takes part in the great debate in Book II. 229.

5. Thus to believe, is the first thing we are to understand by serving God. The second is, to *love* Him.

Now to love God, in the manner the Scripture describes, in the manner God Himself requires of us, and by requiring engages to work in us, is to love Him as the ONE GOD, that is, 'with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind, and with all our strength,'—it is to desire God alone for His own sake; and nothing else, but with reference to Him,—to rejoice in God,—to delight in the Lord, not only to seek, but find, happiness in Him, to enjoy God as the chiefest among ten thousand, to rest in Him, as our God and our all: in a word, to have such a possession of God as makes us always happy.

6. A third thing we are to understand by serving God is, to *resemble* or *imitate* Him.

So the ancient Father *Optimus Dei cultus, imitari quem colis*: 'It is the best worship or service of God, to imitate Him you worship.'

We here speak of imitating or resembling Him in the spirit of our minds for here the true Christian imitation of God begins. 'God is a Spirit', and they that imitate or resemble Him must do it 'in spirit and in truth.'

Now God is love therefore, they who resemble Him in the spirit of their minds are transformed into the same image. They are merciful even as He is merciful. Their soul is all love. They are kind, benevolent, compassionate, tender-hearted, and that not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. Yea, they are, like Him, loving unto every man, and their mercy extends to all His works.

7. One thing more we are to understand by serving God, and that is, the *obeying* Him; the glorifying Him with our bodies, as well as with our spirits, the keeping His outward commandments, the zealously doing whatever He hath enjoined, the carefully avoiding whatever He hath forbidden, the performing all the ordinary actions of life with a single

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6. 'The ancient Father.' I have not yet identified this quotation; I suspect Augustine.



eye and a pure heart, offering them all in holy, fervent love, as sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ.

8. Let us consider now, what we are to understand, on the other hand, by serving mammon. And, first, it implies, the *trusting* in riches, in money, or the things purchasable thereby, as our strength, the means whereby we shall perform whatever cause we have in hand, the trusting in them as our help, by which we look to be comforted in, or delivered out of trouble.

It implies, the trusting in the world for happiness; the supposing that 'a man's life,' the comfort of his life, 'consisteth in the abundance of the things which he possesseth'; the looking for rest in the things that are seen, for content in outward plenty, the expecting that satisfaction in the things of the world, which can never be found out of God.

And if we do this, we cannot but make the world our end, the ultimate end, if not of all, at least of many, of our undertakings, many of our actions and designs, in which we shall aim only at an increase of wealth, at the obtaining pleasure or praise, at the gaining a larger measure of temporal things, without any reference to things eternal.

9. The serving mammon implies, secondly, *loving* the world; desiring it for its own sake, the placing our joy in the things thereof, and setting our hearts upon them, the seeking (what indeed it is impossible we should find) our happiness therein; the resting, with the whole weight of our souls, upon the staff of this broken reed; although daily experience shows it cannot support, but will only 'enter into our hand and pierce it.'

10. To *resemble*, to be *conformed* to, the world, is a third thing we are to understand by serving mammon; to have not only designs, but desires, tempers, affections, suitable to those of the world, to be of an earthly, sensual mind, chained down to the things of earth; to be self-willed, inordinate lovers of ourselves, to think highly of our own attainments; to desire and delight in the praise of men, to fear, shun, and abhor reproach; to be impatient of reproof, easy to be provoked, and swift to return evil for evil.

11. To serve mammon is lastly, to *obey* the world, by outwardly conforming to its maxims and customs, to walk as other men walk, in the common road, in the broad, smooth, beaten path: to be in the fashion; to follow a multitude; to do like the rest of our neighbours—that is, to do the will of the flesh and the mind, to gratify our appetites and inclinations, to sacrifice to ourselves, aim at our own ease and pleasure, in the general course both of our words and actions.

Now what can be more undeniably clear than that we cannot thus serve God and mammon?

12. Does not every man see, that he cannot *comfortably* serve both? that to trim between God and the world is the sure way to be disappointed in both, and to have no rest either in one or the other? How uncomfortable a condition must he be in, who, having the fear but not the love of God—who, serving Him, but not with all his heart—has only the toils and not the joys of religion! He has religion enough to make him miserable, but not enough to make him happy: his religion will not let him enjoy the world, and the world will not let him enjoy God. So that, by halting between both, he loses both, and has no peace either in God or the world.

13. Does not every man see, that he cannot serve both *consistently* with himself? What more glaring inconsistency can be conceived, than must continually appear in his whole behaviour, who is endeavouring to obey both these masters,—striving to ‘serve God and mammon’? He is indeed ‘a sinner that goeth two ways’; one step forward and another backward. He is continually building up with one hand, and pulling down with the other. He loves sin, and he hates it: he is always seeking, and yet always fleeing from, God. He would, and he would not. He is not the same man for one day; no, not for an hour together. He is a motley mixture of all sorts of contrarieties; a heap of contradictions jumbled in one. O be consistent with thyself one way or the other! Turn to the right hand or to the left. If mammon be God, serve thou him; if the Lord, then serve Him. But never think of serving either at all, unless it be with thy whole heart.

14. Does not every reasonable, every thinking man see,

that he cannot *possibly* serve God and mammon? because there is the most absolute contrariety, the most irreconcilable enmity, between them. The contrariety between the most opposite things on earth, between fire and water, darkness and light, vanishes into nothing, when compared to the contrariety between God and mammon. So that, in whatsoever respect you serve the one, you necessarily renounce the other. Do you believe in God through Christ? Do you trust in Him as your strength, your help, your shield, and your exceeding great reward?—as your happiness, your end in all, above all things? Then you cannot trust in riches. It is absolutely impossible you should, so long as you have this faith in God. Do you thus trust in riches? Then you have denied the faith. You do not trust in the living God. Do you love God? Do you seek and find happiness in Him? Then you cannot love the world, neither the things of the world. You are crucified to the world, and the world crucified to you. Do you love the world? Are your affections set on things beneath? Do you seek happiness in earthly things? Then it is impossible you should love God. Then the love of the Father is not in you. Do you resemble God? Are you merciful, as your Father is merciful? Are you transformed, by the renewal of your mind, into the image of Him that created you? Then you cannot be conformed to the present world. You have renounced all its affections and lusts. Are you conformed to the world? Does your soul still bear the image of the earthly? Then you are not renewed in the spirit of your mind. You do not bear the image of the heavenly. Do you obey God? Are you zealous to do His will on earth as the angels do in heaven? Then it is impossible you should obey mammon. Then you set the world at open defiance. You trample its customs and maxims under foot, and will neither follow nor be led by them. Do you follow the world? Do you live like other men? Do you please men? Do you please yourself? Then you cannot be a servant of God. You are of your master and father, the devil.

15. Therefore, 'thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.' Thou shalt lay aside all thoughts

of obeying two masters, of serving God and mammon. Thou shalt propose to thyself no end, no help, no happiness, but God. Thou shalt seek nothing in earth or heaven but Him thou shalt aim at nothing, but to know, to love, and enjoy Him. And because this is all your business below, the only view you can reasonably have, the one design you are to pursue in all things,—‘ Therefore I say unto you ’ (as our Lord continues His discourse), ‘ Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink ; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on ’ a deep and weighty direction, which it imports us well to consider, and thoroughly to understand.

16. Our Lord does not here require, that we should be utterly without thought, even touching the concerns of this life. A giddy, careless temper is at the farthest remove from the whole religion of Jesus Christ. Neither does He require us to be ‘ slothful in business,’ to be slack and dilatory therein. This, likewise, is contrary to the whole spirit and genius of His religion. A Christian abhors sloth as much as drunkenness ; and flees from idleness as he does from adultery. He well knows, that there is one kind of thought and care with which God is well pleased ; which is absolutely needful for the due performance of those outward works unto which the providence of God has called him.

It is the will of God, that every man should labour to eat his own bread ; yea, and that every man should provide for his own, for them of his own household. It is likewise His will, that we should ‘ owe no man anything, but provide things honest in the sight of all men.’ But this cannot be done without taking some thought, without having some care

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16. The Greek word translated in the A.V. ‘ Take no thought ’ means ‘ Do not worry,’ ‘ Do not let your mind be distracted,’ R.V. ‘ Be not anxious.’ The A.V. is not so bad a translation as it seems ; it follows Tyndale, and in the sixteenth century and previously ‘ thought ’ was often used in the sense of ‘ anxiety.’ Thus in 1556 Bishop Ponet says

that ‘ Wriothesley either poisoned himself, or pined away for thought ’ ; and in 1613 Purchas relates that ‘ Soto died of thought in Florida.’ See *Oxford Dict.* s.v. 5.

‘ Honest ’ should be ‘ honourable.’ When Shakespeare is called ‘ honest Will Shakespeare,’ it does not mean that he paid his debts, but that he was a gentleman.

upon our minds ; yea, often, not without long and serious thought, not without much and earnest care. Consequently this care, to provide for ourselves and our household, this thought how to render to all their dues, our blessed Lord does not condemn. Yea, it is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.

It is good and acceptable to God, that we should so take thought concerning whatever we have in hand, as to have a clear comprehension of what we are about to do, and to plan our business before we enter upon it. And it is right that we should carefully consider, from time to time, what steps we are to take therein ; as well as that we should prepare all things beforehand, for the carrying it on in the most effectual manner. This care, termed by some, 'the care of the head,' it was by no means our Lord's design to condemn.

17. What He here condemns is, the care of the heart ; the anxious, uneasy care , the care that hath torment : all such care as does hurt, either to the soul or body. What He forbids is, that care which, sad experience shows, wastes the blood and drinks up the spirits ; which anticipates all the misery it fears, and comes to torment us before the time. He forbids only that care which poisons the blessings of to-day, by fear of what may be to-morrow , which cannot enjoy the present plenty, through apprehensions of future want. This care is not only a sore disease, a grievous sickness of soul, but also a heinous offence against God, a sin of the deepest dye. It is an high affront to the gracious Governor and wise Disposer of all things , necessarily implying, that the great Judge does not do right ; that He does not order all things well. It plainly implies, that He is wanting, either in wisdom, if He does not know what things we stand in need of ; or in goodness, if He does not provide those things for all who put their trust in Him. Beware, therefore, that you take not thought in this

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17. 'Drinks up the spirits.' The old idea, which has affected the literary use of the word up to the present time, was that there were three subtle and highly refined fluids in the body of man, the natural

spirits originating in the liver, the animal spirits in the brain, and the vital in the heart. These circulated through the body along with the blood, and were necessary to life and activity.

sense : be ye anxiously careful for nothing. Take no uneasy thought : this is a plain, sure rule. Uneasy care is unlawful care. With a single eye to God, do all that in you lies to provide things honest in the sight of all men : and then give up all into better hands , leave the whole event to God.

18. ' Take no thought ' of this kind, no uneasy thought, even ' for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink ; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment ? ' If then God gave you life, the greater gift, will He not give you food to sustain it ? If He hath given you the body, how can ye doubt but He will give you raiment to cover it ? more especially, if you give yourselves up to Him, and serve Him with your whole heart. ' Behold,' see before your eyes, ' the fowls of the air : for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ' ; and yet they lack nothing ; ' yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they ? ' Ye that are creatures capable of God, are ye not of more account in the eyes of God ? of a higher rank in the scale of beings ? ' And which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit to his stature ? ' What profit have you then from this anxious thought ? It is every way fruitless and unavailing.

' And why take ye thought for raiment ? ' Have ye not a daily reproof wherever you turn your eyes ? ' Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin ; and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven ' (is cut down, burned up, and seen no more), ' shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith ? ' you, whom He made to endure for ever and ever, to be pictures of His own eternity ! Ye are indeed of

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18. ' One cubit.' This is the literal meaning of the word. The difficulty is that no one would ever dream of increasing his height by eighteen inches through worrying about it. Hence it is better to take ' stature ' in the sense of ' age,' ' length of life,'

which the Jews often speak of in terms of lineal measures, like span and hand-breadth. The meaning will therefore be, ' Who by worrying can lengthen his life even a single foot's-space ? '

little faith ; otherwise ye could not doubt of His love and care ; no, not for a moment.

19. ' Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat,' if we lay up no treasure upon earth ? ' What shall we drink,' if we serve God with all our strength, if our eye be singly fixed on Him ? ' Wherewithal shall we be clothed,' if we are not conformed to the world, if we disoblige those by whom we might be profited ? ' For after all these things do the Gentiles seek '—the Heathens who know not God. But ye are sensible ' your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.' And He hath pointed out to you an infallible way of being constantly supplied therewith : ' Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.'

20. ' Seek ye first the kingdom of God ' before ye give place to any other thought or care, let it be your concern that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (who ' gave His only-begotten Son,' to the end that, believing in Him, ' ye might not perish, but have everlasting life ') may reign in your heart, may manifest Himself in your soul, and dwell and rule there, that He may ' cast down every high thing which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.' Let God have the sole dominion over you : let Him reign without a rival let Him possess all your heart, and rule alone. Let Him be your one desire, your joy, your love, so that all that is within you may continually cry out, ' The Lord God omnipotent reigneth.'

' Seek the kingdom of God, and His righteousness.' Righteousness is the fruit of God's reigning in the heart. And what is righteousness, but love ?—the love of God and of all mankind, flowing from faith in Jesus Christ, and producing humbleness of mind, meekness, gentleness, long-suffering, patience,

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20. The better reading is : ' But seek ye first His kingdom and righteousness,' i.e. the righteousness about which the whole sermon has been concerned as the necessary

qualification for membership in the Kingdom.

' What is righteousness but love ? ' See Sermon VII, 7 note (above, p. 151).

deadness to the world ; and every right disposition of heart, toward God and toward man. And by these it produces all holy actions, whatsoever are lovely or of good report , whatsoever works of faith and labour of love are acceptable to God, and profitable to man.

‘ His righteousness ’ : this is all His righteousness still it is His own free gift to us, for the sake of Jesus Christ the righteous, through whom alone it is purchased for us : and it is His work it is He alone that worketh it in us, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

21. Perhaps the well observing this may give light to some other scriptures, which we have not always so clearly understood. St. Paul, speaking in his Epistle to the Romans concerning the unbelieving Jews, saith, ‘ They, being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.’ I believe this may be one sense of the words : they were ‘ ignorant of God’s righteousness,’ not only of the righteousness of Christ, imputed to every believer, whereby all his sins are blotted out, and he is reconciled to the favour of God , but (which seems here to be more immediately understood) they were ignorant of that inward righteousness, of that holiness of heart, which is with the utmost propriety termed ‘ God’s righteousness,’ as being both His own free gift through Christ, and His own work by His almighty Spirit. And because they were ‘ ignorant ’ of this, they ‘ went about to establish their own righteousness.’ They laboured to establish that outside righteousness which might very properly be termed their own. For neither was it

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21. The passage is Rom. x. 3. Wesley’s interpretation is not what St. Paul meant. He is contrasting, not inward and outward righteousness, but the righteousness which is the result of faith in Christ and that which is aimed at through observing the law. The Jews were ignorant of the way of faith, for it had not yet been revealed, and so sought righteousness through the law. But

now ‘ Christ is the termination of the law to every one that believeth ’ ; not of the ceremonial law only, but of the whole law as a means of attaining righteousness. As Liddon puts it, ‘ Although the moral law is eternal, yet under the gospel it loses its form of external law, and becomes an internal principle of life.’ So Wesley says in Sermon XXIX, iv. 4 : ‘ We have done with the moral law



wrought by the Spirit of God, nor was it owned or accepted of Him. They might work this themselves, by their own natural strength, and when they had done, it was a stink in His nostrils. And yet, trusting in this, they would 'not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God.' Yea, they hardened themselves against that faith whereby alone it was possible to attain it. 'For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.' Christ, when He said, 'It is finished!' put an end to the law,—to the law of external rites and ceremonies, that He might bring a better righteousness through His blood, by that one oblation of Himself once offered, even the image of God, into the inmost soul of every one that believeth.

22. Nearly related to these are those words of the Apostle, in his Epistle to the Philippians: 'I count all things but dung, that I may win Christ'; an entrance into His everlasting kingdom, 'and be found in Him,' believing in Him, 'not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.' 'Not having my own righteousness, which is of the law', a barely external righteousness, the outside religion I formerly had, when I hoped to be accepted of God because I was, 'touching the righteousness which is of the law, blameless', 'but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith, that holiness of heart, that renewal of the soul in all its desires, tempers, and affections, 'which is of God' (it is the work of God,—and not of man), 'by faith'; through the faith of Christ, through the revelation of Jesus Christ in us,

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as a means of procuring our justification.'

'It is finished.' These profound words include this, and much more. As Westcott says in his note on John xix. 30: 'The earthly life had been carried to its issue. Every essential point in the prophetic portraiture of the Messiah had been realized. The last suffering for sin

had been endured. The "end" of all had been gained. Nothing was left undone or unborne.'

22. It is hardly necessary to point out that to the first hearers of the sermon, righteousness could not have had the evangelical meaning which Wesley attaches to it; but for us who have now received the atonement it does carry this signification.

and by faith in His blood, whereby alone we obtain the remission of our sins, and an inheritance among those that are sanctified.

23. 'Seek ye first' this 'kingdom of God' in your hearts, this righteousness, which is the gift and work of God, the image of God renewed in your souls, 'and all these things shall be added unto you', all things needful for the body, such a measure of all as God sees most for the advancement of His kingdom. These shall be added—they shall be thrown in, over and above. In seeking the peace and the love of God, you shall not only find what you more immediately seek, even the kingdom that cannot be moved; but also what you seek not—not at all for its own sake, but only in reference to the other. You shall find, in your way to the kingdom, all outward things, so far as they are expedient for you. This care God hath taken upon Himself: cast you all your care upon Him. He knoweth your wants, and whatsoever is lacking He will not fail to supply.

24. 'Therefore take no thought for the morrow.' Not only, take ye no thought how to lay up treasures on earth, how to increase in worldly substance; take no thought how to procure more food than you can eat, or more raiment than you can put on, or more money than is required from day to day, for the plain, reasonable purposes of life;—but take no uneasy thought, even concerning those things which are absolutely needful for the body. Do not trouble yourself now, with thinking what you shall do at a season which is yet afar off. Perhaps that season will never come, or it will be no concern of yours; before then you will have passed through all the waves, and be landed in eternity. All those distant views do not belong to you, who are but a creature of a day. Nay, what have you to do with the morrow, more strictly speaking? Why should you perplex yourself without need? God provides for you to-day what is needful to sustain the life which He hath given you. It is enough give yourself up into His hands. If you live another day, He will provide for that also.

25. Above all, do not make the care of future things a

pretence for neglecting present duty. This is the most fatal way of 'taking thought for the morrow.' And how common is it among men! Many, if we exhort them to keep a conscience void of offence, to abstain from what they are convinced is evil, do not scruple to reply, 'How then must we live? Must we not take care of ourselves and of our families?' And this they imagine to be a sufficient reason for continuing in known, wilful sin. They say, and perhaps think, they would serve God now, were it not that they should, by-and-by, lose their bread. They would prepare for eternity, but they are afraid of wanting the necessaries of life. So they serve the devil for a morsel of bread, they rush into hell for fear of want, they throw away their poor souls, lest they should, some time or other, fall short of what is needful for their bodies!

It is not strange that they who thus take the matter out of God's hand should be so often disappointed of the very things they seek; that, while they throw away heaven to secure the things of earth, they lose the one, but do not gain the other. The jealous God, in the wise course of His providence, frequently suffers this. So that they who will not cast their care on God, who, taking thought for temporal things, have little concern for things eternal, lose the very portion which they have chosen. There is a visible blast on all their undertakings, whatsoever they do, it doth not prosper; insomuch, that after they have forsaken God for the world, they lose what they sought, as well as what they sought not they fall short of the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, nor yet are other things added unto them.

26. There is another way of 'taking thought for the morrow,' which is equally forbidden in these words. It is possible to take thought in a wrong manner, even with regard to spiritual things, to be so careful about what may be by-and-by as to neglect what is now required at our hands. How insensibly do we slide into this, if we are not continually watching unto prayer! How easily we are carried away, in a kind of waking dream, projecting distant schemes, and draw-

ing fine scenes in our own imagination! We think, what good we will do when we are in such a place, or when such a time is come! How useful we will be, how plenteous in good works, when we are easier in our circumstances! How earnestly we will serve God, when once such an hindrance is out of the way!

Or perhaps you are now in heaviness of soul: God, as it were, hides His face from you. You see little of the light of His countenance you cannot taste His redeeming love. In such a temper of mind, how natural is it to say, 'O how I will praise God, when the light of His countenance shall be again lifted up upon my soul! How will I exhort others to praise Him, when His love is again shed abroad in my heart! Then I will do thus and thus I will speak for God in all places I will not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Then I will redeem the time I will use to the uttermost every talent I have received.' Do not believe thyself. Thou wilt not do it then, unless thou doest it now. 'He that is faithful in that which is little,' of whatsoever kind it be, whether it be worldly substance or the fear or love of God, 'will be faithful in that which is much.' But if thou now hidest one talent in the earth, thou wilt then hide five: that is, if ever they are given; but there is small reason to expect they ever will. Indeed, 'unto him that hath,' that is, uses what he hath, 'shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly. But from him that hath not,' that is, uses not the grace which he hath already received, whether in a larger or smaller degree, 'shall be taken away even that which he hath.'

27. And take no thought for the temptations of to-morrow. This also is a dangerous snare. Think not, 'When such a temptation comes, what shall I do? how shall I stand? I feel I have not power to resist I am not able to conquer that enemy.' Most true you have not now the power which you do not now stand in need of. You are not able at this time to conquer that enemy; and at this time he does not assault you. With the grace you have now, you could not withstand the temptations which you have not. But when the temptation comes, the grace will come. In greater trials you will

have greater strength. When sufferings abound, the consolations of God will, in the same proportion, abound also. So that, in every situation, the grace of God will be sufficient for you. He doth not suffer you 'to be tempted' to-day 'above that ye are able to bear', and 'in every temptation He will make a way to escape.' 'As thy days, so thy strength shall be.'

28. 'Let the morrow,' therefore, 'take thought for the things of itself'; that is, when the morrow comes, then think of it. Live thou to-day. Be it thy earnest care to improve the present hour. This is your own, and it is your all. The past is as nothing, as though it had never been. The future is nothing to you: it is not yours; perhaps it never will be. There is no depending on what is yet to come, for you 'know not what a day may bring forth.' Therefore live to-day lose not an hour: use this moment: for it is your portion. 'Who knoweth the things which have been before him, or which shall be after him under the sun?' The generations that were from the beginning of the world, where are they now? Fled away forgotten. They were, they lived their day; they were shook off the earth, as leaves off their trees: they mouldered away into common dust! Another and another race succeeded; then they 'followed the generation of their fathers, and shall never more see the light.' Now is thy turn upon the earth. 'Rejoice, O young man, in the days of thy youth!' Enjoy the very, very now, by enjoying Him 'whose years fail not.' Now let thine eye be singly fixed on Him in 'whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning'! Now give Him thy heart; now stay thyself on Him, now be thou holy, as He is holy! Now lay hold on the blessed opportunity of doing His acceptable and perfect will! Now rejoice to 'suffer the loss of all things,' so thou mayest 'win Christ.'

29. Gladly suffer to-day, for His name's sake, whatsoever

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28. 'Rejoice, O young man,' &c. Wesley is right in interpreting these words as an exhortation to the young to make the best use of their fresh

life and vigour. The words are not ironical, as some expositors have thought.

He permits this day to come upon thee. But look not at the sufferings of to-morrow. 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.' Evil it is, speaking after the manner of men; whether it be reproach or want, pain or sickness; but in the language of God, all is blessing, it is a precious balm prepared by the wisdom of God, and variously dispensed among His children, according to the various sicknesses of their souls. And He gives in one day sufficient for that day; proportioned to the want and strength of the patient. If, therefore, thou snatchest to-day what belongs to the morrow, if thou addest this to what is given thee already, it will be more than thou canst bear: this is the way, not to heal, but to destroy thy own soul. Take, therefore, just as much as He gives thee to-day to-day, do and suffer His will! To-day, give up thyself, thy body, soul, and spirit to God, through Christ Jesus, desiring nothing, but that God may be glorified in all thou art, all thou doest, all thou sufferest, seeking nothing, but to know God, and His Son Jesus Christ, through the eternal Spirit, pursuing nothing, but to love Him, to serve Him, and to enjoy Him at this hour, and to all eternity!

Now unto 'God the Father, who hath made me and all the world', unto 'God the Son, who hath redeemed me and all mankind'; unto 'God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me and all the elect people of God'; be honour and praise, majesty and dominion, for ever and ever! Amen.

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29. It became customary, very early in the history of the Church, to conclude the sermon with a doxology to the Holy Trinity. This is the custom in the Homilies of the Church of England, which uniformly end with a short ascription of praise to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Wesley uses some sort of doxology in Sermons I, III, IX, XI, and XXI; the one in this sermon is the most formal one that is employed. More commonly he ends with a prayer

or an exhortation; sometimes with a verse of a hymn. It is not usual to print the ascription in published sermons; so that it is possible Wesley used one in more cases than the printed sermons specify. The modern Anglican practice has tended to the uniform use of the familiar form, 'Now to God the Father,' &c.; Methodist preachers have not as a rule adopted this formula, but have followed Wesley in the freer style of their conclusions.

*[Here ends the second volume of the Sermons]*



# SERMONS

ON

Several Occasions:

IN

THREE VOLUMES.

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BY

JOHN WESLEY, M. A.

Fellow of *Lincoln-College*, OXFORD.

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VOL. III.

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MDCCL.



*The first edition of this volume contains twelve sermons (Nos. XXV to XXXVI). There is no Contents, no Index, and no list of the Wesley publications. 260 pp.*

*In the second edition ('Bristol: Printed by William Pine, and sold at the New Room in the Horsefair, and at the Foundery, near Upper Moorfields, London,' pp. 278, no date), after Charles Wesley's hymn on 'The Promise of Sanctification' (Ezek. xxxvi. 25, &c., twenty-eight verses of four lines, filling seven pages), an additional sermon is inserted on 'Wandering Thoughts' (see introduction to No. XXXVI, below, vol. ii. p. 178).*

*An edition, Dublin, 1750; Fourth edition, Paramore, 1787; Fifth edition, 1797.*

*Several of the sermons from this and the two preceding volumes were frequently reprinted separately.*

SERMON XXV  
UPON OUR LORD'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT

DISCOURSE X

I FIND record of this sermon, or rather a sermon on verse 7 (' Ask, and it shall be given you ') being preached on June 2, 1742, at Mrs. Holmes's, Smith House, Lightcliffe, near Halifax, the first home of Methodism in that district (see photograph in Standard Edition of *Journal*, iii. 297) ; in the church at Wroot on June 13 of the same year ; and at Morvah on April 12, 1744. From the text Matt. vii. 7 Wesley preached at Taddington in May 1747 ; at Lewisham on September 29, 1747 ; at Garth on February 19, 1748 ; and at Snowfields in September 1761.

The original connexion of this passage is not easy to determine. The first section on judging follows in St. Luke's version immediately on Matt. v. 48, and is an example of the mercifulness which is there commended. The section on prayer occurs in a different context in Luke xi. 9-13. The Golden Rule in St. Luke's version follows Matt. v. 42, where it seems more natural. Probably St. Matthew placed it here as the conclusion of the sermon, what follows being of the nature of an epilogue. Wesley's suggestion that our Lord now ' proceeds to point out the main hindrances of this religion ' is not at all convincing. Votaw's idea is better, that the first section deals with the conduct of members of the kingdom towards their fellow men ; and that the second is really extraneous to the present discourse.

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*Judge not, that ye be not judged.  
For with what judgement ye judge, ye shall be judged : and with what  
measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.  
And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest  
not the beam that is in thine own eye ?  
Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye ;  
and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye ?  
Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye ; and then shalt  
thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.  
Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls  
before swine, lest they trample them under their feet and turn again  
and rend you.*

*Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you :*

*For every one that asketh receiveth ; and he that seeketh findeth ; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*

*Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone ?*

*Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent ?*

*If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him ?*

*Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them : for this is the law and the prophets.—MATT. vii. 1-12.*

1. OUR blessed Lord, having now finished His main design, having first delivered the sum of true religion, carefully guarded against those glosses of men whereby they would make the Word of God of none effect, and having next laid down rules touching that right intention which we are to preserve in all outward actions, now proceeds to point out the main hindrances of this religion, and concludes all with a suitable application.

2. In the fifth chapter, our great Teacher has fully described inward religion in its various branches. He has there laid before us those dispositions of soul which constitute real Christianity, the tempers contained in that 'holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord', the affections which, when flowing from their proper fountain, from a living faith in God through Christ Jesus, are intrinsically and essentially good and acceptable to God. In the sixth He hath shown how all our actions, likewise, even those that are indifferent in their own nature, may be made holy, and good, and acceptable to God, by a pure and holy intention. Whatever is done without this, He declares, is of no value with God : whereas, whatever outward works are thus consecrated to God are, in His sight, of great price.

3. In the former part of this chapter, He points out the most common and most fatal hindrances of this holiness in the latter, He exhorts us, by various motives, to break through all, and secure that prize of our high calling.

4. The first hindrance He cautions us against is judging. 'Judge not, that ye be not judged.' Judge not others, that ye be not judged of the Lord; that ye bring not vengeance on your own heads. 'For with what judgement ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again': a plain and equitable rule, whereby God permits you to determine for yourselves, in what manner He shall deal with you in the judgement of the great day.

5. There is no station of life, nor any period of time, from the hour of our first repenting and believing the gospel, till we are made perfect in love, wherein this caution is not needful for every child of God. For occasions of judging can never be wanting, and the temptations to it are innumerable, many whereof are so artfully disguised, that we fall into the sin before we suspect any danger. And unspeakable are the mischiefs produced hereby,—always to him that judges another, thus wounding his own soul, and exposing himself to the righteous judgement of God; and frequently to those who are judged, whose hands hang down, who are weakened and hindered in their course, if not wholly turned out of the way, and caused to [draw] back even to perdition. Yea, how often, when this 'root of bitterness springs up, are many defiled thereby'; by reason whereof the way of truth itself is evil spoken of, and that worthy name blasphemed whereby we are called!

6. Yet it does not appear that our Lord designed this caution only, or chiefly, for the children of God, but rather for the children of the world, for the men who know not God. These cannot but hear of those who are not of the world, who follow after the religion above described, who endeavour to be humble, serious, gentle, merciful, and pure in heart; who earnestly desire such measures of these holy

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Par. 4. The usual view is that the second clause refers to the judgement of the Lord, as Wesley takes it; but Augustine and some others interpret it as referring to the judgement of our fellow men: he who judges others generously will receive corresponding treatment from them.

6. Surely this precept, like all the others in the Sermon, was intended for the members of the Kingdom, not for 'the children of the world.' But one can quite understand Wesley's purpose and motive in applying it as he does. He and his Methodists were being judged

tempers as they have not yet attained, and wait for them in doing all good to all men, and patiently suffering evil. Whoever go but thus far, cannot be hid, no more than a 'city set upon a hill.' And why do not those who 'see their good works, glorify their Father which is in heaven?' What excuse have they for not treading in their steps—for not imitating their example, and being followers of them, as they are also of Christ? Why, in order to provide an excuse for themselves, they condemn those whom they ought to imitate. They spend their time in finding out their neighbours' faults, instead of amending their own. They are so busied about others going out of the way, that themselves never come into it at all; at least, never get forward, never go beyond a poor dead form of godliness, without the power.

7. It is to these more especially that our Lord says, 'Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye'—the infirmities, the mistakes, the imprudence, the weakness of the children of God—'but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?' Thou considerest not the damnable impenitence, the satanic pride, the accursed self-will, the idolatrous love of the world, which are in thyself, and which make thy whole life an abomination to the Lord. Above all, with what supine carelessness and indifference art thou dancing over the mouth of hell! And 'how then,' with what grace, with what decency or modesty, 'wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye': the excess of zeal for God, the extreme of self-denial, the too great disengagement from worldly cares and employments, the desire to be day and night in prayer, or hearing the words of eternal life? 'And, behold, a beam is in thine own eye!' Not a mote, like one of these.—'Thou hypocrite!' who pretendest to

most unfairly and unkindly on all hands at this time; and he could not resist the impulse to apply this text to those who were abusing and vilifying him and his work.

7. In Samuel Wesley senior's *History of the New Testament attested in Verse* (1717) there is a

quaint cut by Sturt representing a man, with a beam about a yard long projecting from his eye, trying to pull out a splinter of the size of a lucifer match from the eye of another man.

'Thou hypocrite!'—because his censorious criticism masquerades

care for others, and hast no care for thy own soul ; who makest a show of zeal for the cause of God, when in truth thou neither lovest nor fearest Him ! ' First cast out the beam out of thine own eye ' : cast out the beam of impenitence ! Know thyself ! See and feel thyself a sinner ! Feel that thy inward parts are very wickedness, that thou art altogether corrupt and abominable, and that the wrath of God abideth on thee ! Cast out the beam of pride , abhor thyself ; sink down as in dust and ashes , be more and more little, and mean, and base, and vile in thine own eyes ! Cast out the beam of self-will ! Learn what that meaneth, ' If any man will come after Me, let him renounce himself.' Deny thyself, and take up thy cross daily. Let thy whole soul cry out, ' I came down from heaven '—for so thou didst, thou never-dying spirit, whether thou knowest it or no—' not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me.' Cast out the beam of love of the world. Love not the world, neither the things of the world. Be thou crucified unto the world, and the world crucified unto thee. Only *use* the world, but *enjoy* God. Seek all thy happiness in Him ! Above all, cast out the grand beam, that supine carelessness and indifference ! Deeply consider that ' one thing is needful ' ; the one thing which thou hast scarce ever thought of. Know and feel, that thou art a poor, vile, guilty worm, quivering over the great gulf ! What art thou ? A sinner born to die ; a leaf driven before the wind ; a vapour ready to vanish away ; just appear-

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under the pretence of a friendly act. Do we not all know these candid friends ?

' Let him renounce himself ' ; much better than ' deny,' which has come to have a conventional and quite misleading meaning. A man who gives up smoking, or sugar in his tea, talks about this as ' self-denial.' Self-denial is the renouncing of *self*, not of some small indulgence. Compare Sermon XLII on Self-denial.

' One thing is needful.' The better

reading in Luke x. 41 is, ' There is need of few things, or indeed of one only.' The reference is to Martha's elaborate provision for our Lord's entertainment ; less would have been sufficient, indeed one dish would have served ; and then Martha would have had leisure for listening to our Lord's teaching. But the application of the phrase to religion has become so common that it can hardly now be altered, at any rate in popular usage.

ing, and then scattered into air, to be no more seen! See this! 'And then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.' Then, if thou hast leisure from the concerns of thy own soul, thou shalt know how to correct thy brother also.

8. But what is properly the meaning of this word, 'Judge not'? What is the judging which is here forbidden? It is not the same as evil-speaking, although it is frequently joined therewith. Evil-speaking is the relating anything that is evil concerning an absent person; whereas judging may indifferently refer either to the absent or the present. Neither does it necessarily imply the speaking at all, but only the thinking evil of another. Not that all kind of thinking evil of others is that judging which our Lord condemns. If I see one commit robbery or murder, or hear him blaspheme the name of God, I cannot refrain from thinking ill of the robber or murderer. Yet this is not evil judging there is no sin in this, nor anything contrary to tender affection.

9. The thinking of another in a manner that is contrary to love, is that judging which is here condemned; and this may be of various kinds. For, first we may think another to blame when he is not. We may lay to his charge (at least in our own mind) the things of which he is not guilty; the words which he has never spoke, or the actions which he has never done. Or we may think his manner of acting was wrong, although in reality it was not. And even where nothing can justly be blamed, either in the thing itself, or in the manner of doing it, we may suppose his intention was not good, and so condemn him on that ground; at the same time that He who searches the heart sees his simplicity and godly sincerity.

10. But we may not only fall into the sin of judging, by condemning the innocent, but also, secondly, by condemning the guilty in a higher degree than he deserves. This species of judging is likewise an offence against justice, as well as mercy; and yet such an offence as nothing can secure us from

but the strongest and tenderest affection. Without this, we readily suppose one who is acknowledged to be in fault, to be more in fault than he really is. We undervalue whatever good is found in him. Nay, we are not easily induced to believe that anything good can remain in him in whom we have found anything that is evil.

11. All this shows a manifest want of that love which οὐ λογίζεται κακόν—*thinketh no evil*; which never draws an unjust or unkind conclusion from any premisses whatsoever. Love will not infer from a person's falling once into an act of open sin, that he is accustomed so to do, that he is habitually guilty of it: and if he was habitually guilty once, love does not conclude he is so still; much less, that if he is now guilty of this, therefore he is guilty of other sins also. These evil reasonings all pertain to that sinful judging which our Lord here guards us against, and which we are in the highest degree concerned to avoid, if we love either God or our own souls.

12. But supposing we do not condemn the innocent, neither the guilty any farther than they deserve; still we may not be altogether clear of the snare: for there is a third sort of sinful judging, which is the condemning any person at all where there is not sufficient evidence. And be the facts we suppose ever so true, yet that does not acquit us. For they ought not to have been supposed, but proved; and till they were, we ought to have formed no judgement. I say, 'till they were', for neither are we excused, although the facts admit of ever so strong a proof, unless that proof be produced before we pass sentence, and compared with the evidence on the other side. Nor can we be excused, if ever we pass a full sentence before the accused has spoken for himself. Even a Jew might teach us this, as a mere lesson of justice, abstracted from mercy and brotherly love: 'Doth our law,' says Nicodemus, 'judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?' (John vii. 51). Yea, a Heathen could reply, when the chief of the Jewish nation desired to have judgement against his prisoner, 'It is not the manner of the

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1. See Sermon XVII, iii. 11 and note.



Romans ' to judge ' any man, before he that is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him.'

13. Indeed we could not easily fall into sinful judging, were we only to observe that rule which another of those heathen Romans affirms to have been the measure of his own practice. ' I am so far,' says he, ' from lightly believing every man's or any man's evidence against another, that I do not easily or immediately believe a man's evidence against himself. I always allow him second thoughts, and many times counsel too.' Go, thou who art called a Christian, and do likewise lest the Heathen rise and condemn thee in that day !

14. But how rarely should we condemn or judge one another, at least how soon would that evil be remedied, were we to walk by that clear and express rule which our Lord Himself has taught us!—' If thy brother shall trespass against thee,' or if thou hear or believe that he hath, ' go and tell him of his fault between thee and him alone.' This is the first step thou art to take. ' But if he will not hear, take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' This is the second step. ' If he neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church', either to the overseers thereof, or to the whole congregation. Thou hast then done thy part. Then think of it no more, but commend the whole to God.

15. But supposing thou hast by the grace of God ' cast the beam out of thine own eye,' and dost now clearly see ' the mote ' or the beam ' which is in thy brother's eye,' yet beware thou dost not receive hurt thyself by endeavouring to help him. Still ' give not that which is holy unto dogs.' Do

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13. A note in the 1771 edition attributes this saying to Seneca. It is quoted again in Sermon XVII, iii. 6.

15. Wesley's attempt to link this verse on to the preceding ones is not convincing. It seems to be an isolated, possibly a proverbial, saying ;

placed here by St. Matthew as indicating another aspect of the duty of members of the Kingdom to the outsiders. Some have found in it an indication of the objection on the part of the Jewish Christians to the indiscriminate preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles. It was interpreted

not lightly account any to be of this number, but if it evidently appear that they deserve the title, then 'cast ye not your pearls before swine.' Beware of that zeal which is not according to knowledge. For this is another great hindrance in their way who would be 'perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect.' They who desire this cannot but desire that all mankind should partake of the common blessing. And when we ourselves first partake of the heavenly gift, the divine 'evidence of things not seen,' we wonder that all mankind do not see the things which we see so plainly, and make no doubt at all but we shall open the eyes of all we have any intercourse with. Hence we are for attacking all we meet without delay, and constraining them to see, whether they will or no; and by the ill success of this intemperate zeal we often suffer in our own souls. To prevent this spending our strength in vain, our Lord adds this needful caution (needful to all, but more especially to those who are now warm in their first love), 'Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.'

16. 'Give not that which is holy unto the dogs.' Beware of thinking that any deserve this appellation, till there is full and incontestable proof, such as you can no longer resist. But when it is clearly and indisputably proved, that they are unholy and wicked men, not only strangers to but enemies to God, to all righteousness and true holiness, 'give not that which is holy,' τὸ ἅγιον—'the holy thing,' emphatically so called, unto these. The holy, the peculiar doctrines of the gospel—such as were hid from the ages and generations of old, and are now made known to us, only by the revelation of

in the *Didache* and by some of the Fathers as forbidding the administration of the Eucharist to the unbaptized.

16. Wesley is far too complimentary to Felix. He was neither rational nor honourable; and he had no such tincture of philosophy as would entitle him to be called an Epicurean.

But this last word had come to be used quite loosely for a man of selfish, pleasure-loving disposition, and more particularly for a *bon vivant*; though this was very unjust to Epicurus, who was a Hedonist, but found his highest pleasure in the simple life of a student of philosophy.

2.

Zeal

of knowledge

to

Jesus Christ, and by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit—are not to be prostituted unto these men, who know not if there be any Holy Ghost. Not indeed that the ambassadors of Christ can refrain from declaring them in the great congregation, wherein some of these may probably be we must speak, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear, but this is not the case with private Christians. They do not bear that awful character, nor are they under any manner of obligation to force these great and glorious truths on them who contradict and blaspheme, who have a rooted enmity against them. Nay, they ought not so to do, but rather to lead them as they are able to bear. Do not begin a discourse with these upon remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, but talk with them in their own manner, and upon their own principles. With the rational, honourable, and unjust Epicure, reason of ‘righteousness, temperance, and judgement to come.’ This is the most probable way to make Felix tremble. Reserve higher subjects for men of higher attainments.

17. Neither ‘cast your pearls before swine.’ Be very unwilling to pass this judgement on any man; but if the fact be plain and undeniable, if it is clear beyond all dispute, if the swine do not endeavour to disguise themselves, but rather glory in their shame, making no pretence to purity, either of heart or life, but working all uncleanness with greediness, then cast not ye your pearls before them. Talk not to them of the mysteries of the kingdom, of the things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, which, of consequence, as they have no other inlets of knowledge, no spiritual senses, it cannot enter into their hearts to conceive. Tell not them of the exceeding great and precious promises which God hath given us in the Son of His love. What conception can they have of being made partakers of the divine nature, who do not even desire to escape the corruption that is in the world through lust? Just as much knowledge as swine have of pearls, and as much relish as they have for them, so much relish have

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17. ‘Inconvenience’ is a word that meaning. It now means some little has suffered much weakening in trifling trouble; but in the older

they for the deep things of God, so much knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel, who are immersed in the mire of this world, in worldly pleasures, desires, and cares. O cast not those pearls before these, 'lest they trample them under their feet!'—lest they utterly despise what they cannot understand, and speak evil of the things which they know not. Nay, it is probable, this would not be the only inconvenience which would follow—it would not be strange, if they were, according to their nature, to 'turn again and rend you', if they were to return you evil for good, cursing for blessing, and hatred for your good will. Such is the enmity of the carnal mind against God, and all the things of God. Such is the treatment you are to expect from these, if you offer them the unpardonable affront of endeavouring to save their souls from death, to pluck them as brands out of the burning.

18. And yet you need not utterly despair even of these, who, for the present, 'turn again and rend you.' For if all your arguments and persuasives fail, there is yet another remedy left, and one that is frequently found effectual, when no other method avails, this is prayer. Therefore, whatever you desire or want, either for others or for your own soul, 'ask, and it shall be given you, seek, and ye shall find, knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' The neglect of this is a third grand hindrance of holiness. Still we have not, because we ask not." O how meek and gentle, how lowly in heart, how full of love both to God and men, might ye have been at this day, if you had only asked, if you had continued instant in prayer! Therefore, now, at least, 'ask, and it

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English, as here, it is used of the most serious misfortunes. Thus Powell (1584) calls a massacre 'a great inconvenience'; Armin (1608) speaks of 'rapine, ruin, and a thousand inconveniences.' It would be quite good English of the eighteenth century to say that it was a great inconvenience to Charles I to lose his head.

Wesley misses the reversed parallelism in this passage.

Give not that which is holy to the dogs;  
Neither cast your pearls before the swine;  
Lest they [the swine] trample them under their  
feet;  
And they [the dogs] turn round and tear you.

18. Another rather forced attempt to find a connexion between this

shall be given unto you.' 'Ask,' that ye may thoroughly experience, and perfectly practise, the whole of that religion which our Lord has here so beautifully described. It shall then be given you to be holy as He is holy, both in heart and in all manner of conversation. 'Seek,' in the way He hath ordained, in searching the Scriptures, in hearing His word, in meditating thereon, in fasting, in partaking of the Supper of the Lord, and surely ye shall find ye shall find that pearl of great price, that faith which overcometh the world, that peace which the world cannot give, that love which is the earnest of your inheritance. 'Knock', continue in prayer, and in every other way of the Lord be not weary or faint in your mind press on to the mark take no denial, let Him not go until He bless you. 'And the door' of mercy, of holiness, of heaven, 'shall be opened unto you.'

19. It is in compassion to the hardness of our heart, so unready to believe the goodness of God, that our Lord is pleased to enlarge upon this head, and to repeat and confirm what He hath spoken. 'For every one,' saith He, 'that asketh, receiveth', so that none need come short of the blessing; 'and he that seeketh,' even every one that seeketh, 'findeth' the love and the image of God, 'and to him that knocketh,' to every one that knocketh, the gate of righteousness shall be opened. So that here is no room for any to be discouraged, as though they might ask, or seek, or knock in vain. Only remember always to pray, to seek, to knock, and not to faint. And then the promise standeth sure. It is firm as the pillars of heaven,—yea, more firm; for heaven and earth shall pass away, but His word shall not pass away.

20. To cut off every pretence for unbelief, our blessed Lord, in the following verses, illustrates yet farther what He had said, by an appeal to what passes in our own breasts 'What man,' saith He, 'is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will give him a stone?' Will even natural affection

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verse and the preceding. St. Luke has it in chap. xi. in connexion with the giving of the form of the Lord's Prayer to the disciples. It seems,

like the previous verse, to be an isolated saying, not part of the original sermon, but incorporated into it by St. Matthew.

permit you to refuse the reasonable request of one you love ? ' Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent ? ' Will he give him hurtful instead of profitable things ? So that even from what you feel and do yourselves, you may receive the fullest assurance, as, on the one hand, that no ill effect can possibly attend your asking, so, on the other, that it will be attended with that good effect, a full supply of all your wants. For ' if ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven, ' who is pure, unmixed, essential goodness, ' give good things to them that ask Him ? ' or (as He expresses it on another occasion), ' give the Holy Ghost to them that ask Him ? ' In Him are included all good things all wisdom, peace, joy, love, the whole treasures of holiness and happiness ; all that God hath prepared for them that love Him.

21. But that your prayer may have its full weight with God, see that ye be in charity with all men. For, otherwise, it is more likely to bring a curse than a blessing on your own head, nor can you expect to receive any blessing from God while you have not charity towards your neighbour. Therefore, let this hindrance be removed without delay. Confirm your love towards one another, and towards all men. And love them not in word only, but in deed and in truth. ' Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets.'

22. This is that royal law, that golden rule of mercy, as well as justice, which even the heathen Emperor caused to be written over the gate of his palace, a rule which many believe to be naturally engraved on the mind of every one that comes into the world. And thus much is certain, that it commends

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22. The Golden Rule is a summary of the whole sermon. It is found in the negative form in Hillel : ' What is hateful to thee, thou shalt not do to thy neighbour ; this word is the whole law, and all else is commentary ' (Shabbath, 31 A). The positive form appears to be our Lord's own coinage. The heathen Emperor is Alexander Severus (A.D. 222-35).

Hobbes says that the moral regulations, which he calls ' immutable and eternal laws of nature,' are all summarized in this rule, which, however, he gives in the negative form. John Stuart Mill says, ' To do as you would be done by, and to love your neighbour as yourself, constitute the ideal perfection of utilitarian morality ' (*Utilit.* p. 323).

itself, as soon as heard, to every man's conscience and understanding, insomuch that no man can knowingly offend against it, without carrying his condemnation in his own breast.

23. 'This is the law and the prophets.' Whatsoever is written in that law which God of old revealed to mankind, and whatsoever precepts God has given by His holy prophets which have been since the world began, they are all summed up in these few words, they are all contained in this short direction. And this, rightly understood, comprises the whole of that religion which our Lord came to establish upon earth.

24. It may be understood either in a positive or negative sense. If understood in a negative sense, the meaning is, 'Whatever ye would not that men should do to you, do not ye unto them.' Here is a plain rule, always ready at hand, always easy to be applied. In all cases relating to your neighbour, make his case your own. Suppose the circumstances to be changed, and yourself to be just as he is now, and then beware that you indulge no temper or thought, that no word pass out of your lips, that you take no step, which you should have condemned in him, upon such a change of circumstances. If understood in a direct and positive sense, the plain meaning of it is, 'Whatsoever you could reasonably desire of him, supposing yourself to be in his circumstances, that do, to the uttermost of your power, to every child of man.'

25. To apply this in one or two obvious instances it is clear to every man's own conscience, we would not that others should judge us, should causelessly or lightly think evil of us, much less would we that any should speak evil of us—should publish our real faults or infirmities. Apply this to yourself. Do not unto another what you would not he should do unto you, and you will never more judge your neighbour, never causelessly or lightly think evil of any one, much less will you speak evil; you will never mention even the real fault

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23. The Law and the Prophets means the Old Testament Scriptures; more fully specified sometimes as 'The Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms.'

24. 'Reasonably desire': an important qualification. The rule cannot be worked mechanically, but must be treated as a principle of conduct, to be rationally applied.

of an absent person, unless so far as you are convinced it is absolutely needful for the good of other souls.

26. Again we would that all men should love and esteem us, and behave towards us according to justice, mercy, and truth. And we may reasonably desire, that they should do us all the good they can do, without injuring themselves, yea, that in outward things (according to the known rule), their superfluities should give way to our conveniences ; their conveniences, to our necessities ; and their necessities, to our extremities. Now, then, let us walk by the same rule : let us do unto all as we would they should do to us. Let us love and honour all men. Let justice, mercy, and truth govern all our minds and actions. Let our superfluities give way to our neighbour's conveniences (and who then will have any superfluities left ?) ; our conveniences, to our neighbour's necessities, our necessities, to his extremities.

27. This is pure and genuine morality. This do, and thou shalt live. ' As many as walk by this rule, peace be to them and mercy ' ; for they are ' the Israel of God.' But then, be it observed, none can walk by this rule (nor ever did from the beginning of the world), none can love his neighbour as himself, unless he first love God. And none can love God, unless he believe in Christ ; unless he have redemption through His blood, and the Spirit of God bearing witness with his spirit that he is a child of God. Faith, therefore, is still the root of all, of present as well as future salvation. Still we must say to every sinner, ' Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved ' : thou shalt be saved now, that thou mayest be saved for ever ; saved on earth, that thou mayest be saved in heaven. Believe in Him, and thy faith will work by love. Thou wilt love the Lord thy God, because He hath loved thee : thou wilt love thy neighbour as thyself and then it will be thy glory and joy, to exert and increase this love, not barely by abstaining from what is contrary thereto, from every unkind thought, word, and action, but by showing all that kindness to every man which thou wouldest he should show unto thee.



## SERMON XXVI

### UPON OUR LORD'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT

#### DISCOURSE XI

HERE begins the epilogue to the Sermon. The better reading is, 'Enter ye in by the narrow gate; for wide and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. How narrow is the gate and contracted the way that leadeth unto life, and how few are they that find it!' It is advisable to replace 'strait' by 'narrow,' for the former word is very liable to be confused with 'straight'; as indeed it is by John Bunyan in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, where he describes the narrow way as being 'as straight as a rule can make it.' The thought of the two ways is found in Jer. xxi. 8: 'Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death.' Indeed, the figure is common both in Hebrew and early Christian literature. Here our Lord is thinking of the narrow gate of an Eastern city; which the people pass through from within to a narrow path which 'leads away' from the city to the place whither they are going. The gate is thus the entrance to the way of life, like the wicket-gate in the *Pilgrim's Progress*; and the city is the 'City of Destruction.' A similar saying is found in a different context in Luke xiii. 24; but there the gate, or rather door, is the door of heaven, and the reference is eschatological. Many will try to get into heaven in vain at the last day—quite a different idea.

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*Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*—MATT. vii. 13, 14.

I. OUR Lord, having warned us of the dangers which easily beset us at our first entrance upon real religion, the hindrances which naturally arise from within, from the wickedness of our own hearts; now proceeds to apprise us of the hindrances from without, particularly ill example and ill

advice. By one or the other of these, thousands, who once ran well, have drawn back unto perdition—yea, many of those who were not novices in religion, who had made some progress in righteousness. His caution, therefore, against these He presses upon us with all possible earnestness, and repeats again and again, in variety of expressions, lest by any means we should let it slip. Thus, effectually to guard us against the former, 'Enter ye in,' saith He, 'at the strait gate for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it': to secure us from the latter, 'Beware,' saith He, 'of false prophets.' We shall, at present, consider the former only.

2. 'Enter ye in,' saith our blessed Lord, 'at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.'

3. In these words we may observe, first, the inseparable properties of the way to hell: 'Wide is the gate, broad the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat' secondly, the inseparable properties of the way to heaven: 'Strait is that gate, and few there be that find it': thirdly, a serious exhortation grounded thereon, 'Enter ye in at the strait gate.'

I. 1. We may observe, first, the inseparable properties of the way to hell: 'wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.'

2. Wide indeed is the gate, and broad the way, that leadeth to destruction! For sin is the gate of hell, and wickedness the way to destruction. And how wide a gate is that of sin! How broad is the way of wickedness! The 'commandment' of God 'is exceeding broad'; as extending not only to all our actions, but to every word which goeth out of our lips, yea, every thought that rises in our heart,

And sin is equally broad with the commandment, seeing any breach of the commandment is sin. Yea, rather, it is a thousand times broader, since there is only one way of keeping the commandment, for we do not properly keep it, unless both the thing done, the manner of doing it, and all the other circumstances, are right: but there are a thousand ways of breaking every commandment, so that this gate is wide indeed.

3. To consider this a little more particularly: how wide do those parent-sins extend, from which all the rest derive their being; that carnal mind which is enmity against God, pride of heart, self-will, and love of the world! Can we fix any bounds to them? Do they not diffuse themselves through all our thoughts, and mingle with all our tempers? Are they not the leaven which leavens, more or less, the whole mass of our affections? May we not, on a close and faithful examination of ourselves, perceive these roots of bitterness continually springing up, infecting all our words, and tainting all our actions? And how innumerable an offspring do they bring forth, in every age and nation! Even enough to cover the whole earth with darkness and cruel habitations.

4. O who is able to reckon up their accursed fruits; to count all the sins, whether against God or our neighbour, not which imagination might paint, but which may be matter of daily melancholy experience! Nor need we range over all the earth to find them. Survey any one kingdom, any single country, or city, or town; and how plenteous is this harvest! And let it not be one of those which are still overspread with Mahometan or Pagan darkness, but of those which name the name of Christ, which profess to see the light of His glorious gospel. Go no farther than the kingdom to which we belong, the city wherein we are now. We call ourselves Christians; yea, and that of the purest sort we are Protestants; Reformed Christians! But, alas! who shall carry on the reformation of our opinions into our hearts and lives? Is

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1. par. 4. 'The city wherein we are now': apparently London is meant.

there not a cause ? For how innumerable are our sins ; and those of the deepest dye ! Do not the grossest abominations, of every kind, abound among us from day to day ? Do not sins of every sort cover the land, as the waters cover the sea ? Who can count them ? Rather go and count the drops of rain, or the sands on the sea-shore. So ' wide is the gate,' so ' broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction ' !

5. ' And many there be who go in at ' that gate , many who walk in that way , almost as many as go in at the gate of death, as sink into the chambers of the grave. For it cannot be denied (though neither can we acknowledge it but with shame and sorrow of heart), that even in this, which is called a Christian country, the generality of every age and sex, of every profession and employment, of every rank and degree, high and low, rich and poor, are walking in the way of destruction. The far greater part of the inhabitants of this city, to this day, live in sin ; in some palpable, habitual, known transgression of the law they profess to observe ; yea, in some outward transgression, some gross, visible kind of ungodliness or unrighteousness, some open violation of their duty, either to God or man. These then, none can deny, are all in the way that leadeth to destruction. Add to these, those who have a name indeed that they live, but were never yet alive to God ; those that outwardly appear fair to men, but are inwardly full of all uncleanness , full of pride or vanity, of anger or revenge, of ambition or covetousness , lovers of themselves, lovers of the world, lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God. These, indeed, may be highly esteemed of men ; but they are an abomination to the Lord. And how greatly will these saints of the world swell the number of the children of hell ! Yea, add all, whatever they be in other respects, whether they have more or less of the form of godliness, who,

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5. This severe indictment of the religious condition of England in the first half of the eighteenth century is amply supported by contemporary evidence. See Tyerman's *Life of Wesley*, I. chap. iii. ; *New Hist. of Methodism*, Bk. I, chap. i. Still,

the time that produced such men as Gibson of London, Hoadley of Winchester, Sherlock, Waterland, Calamy, Watts, Lardner, Doddridge, Edward Young, Addison, and Samuel Johnson was not altogether bad.

'being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness' as the ground of their reconciliation to God and acceptance with Him, of consequence have not 'submitted themselves unto the righteousness which is of God' by faith. Now, all these things joined together in one, how terribly true is our Lord's assertion, 'Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat !'

6. Nor does this only concern the vulgar herd—the poor, base, stupid part of mankind. Men of eminence in the world, men who have many fields and yoke of oxen, do not desire to be excused from this. On the contrary, 'many wise men after the flesh,' according to the human methods of judging, 'many mighty,' in power, in courage, in riches, many 'noble, are called'; called into the broad way, by the world, the flesh, and the devil, and they are not disobedient to that calling. Yea, the higher they are raised in fortune and power, the deeper do they sink into wickedness. The more blessings they have received from God, the more sins do they commit, using their honour or riches, their learning or wisdom, not as means of working out their salvation, but rather of excelling in vice, and so ensuring their own destruction.

II. 1. And the very reason why many of these go on so securely in the broad way, is, because it is broad, not considering that this is the inseparable property of the way to destruction. 'Many there be,' saith our Lord, 'which go in thereat', for the very reason why they should flee from it; even 'because strait is the gate, and narrow the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.'

2. This is an inseparable property of the way to heaven. So narrow is the way that leadeth unto life—unto life ever-

6. 'The vulgar herd.' Cf. Horace *Od.* iii. 1. 1, 'Odi profanum vulgus.' These contemptuous expressions about the mass of mankind—'poor, base, stupid'—come unpleasantly from the lips of the great evangelist.

'Men of eminence'; like Boling-

broke, Walpole, Granville, Chesterfield, the Deists Toland and Tindal, and many others.

II. 1. 'Securely,' i.e. without fear, without anxiety; not, as in modern use, safely.

lasting—so strait the gate, that nothing unclean, nothing unholy, can enter. No sinner can pass through that gate, until he is saved from all his sins. Not only from his outward sins, from his evil ‘conversation received by tradition from his fathers.’ It will not suffice, that he hath ‘ceased to do evil,’ and ‘learned to do well’; he must not only be saved from all sinful actions, and from all evil and useless discourse, but inwardly changed, thoroughly renewed in the spirit of his mind otherwise he cannot pass through the gate of life, he cannot enter into glory.

3. For, ‘narrow is the way that leadeth unto life’; the way of universal holiness. Narrow indeed is the way of poverty of spirit; the way of holy mourning, the way of meekness; and that of hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Narrow is the way of mercifulness; of love unfeigned; the way of purity of heart, of doing good unto all men; and of gladly suffering evil, all manner of evil, for righteousness’ sake.

4. ‘And few there be that find it.’ Alas! how few find even the way of heathen honesty! How few are there that do nothing to another which they would not another should do unto them! How few that are clear before God, from acts either of injustice or unkindness! How few that do not ‘offend with their tongue’! that speak nothing unkind, nothing untrue! What a small proportion of mankind are innocent even of outward transgressions! And how much smaller a proportion have their hearts right before God,—clean and holy in His sight! Where are they, whom His all-searching eye discerns to be truly humble, to abhor themselves in dust and ashes in the presence of God their Saviour, to be deeply and steadily serious, feeling their wants, and ‘passing the time of their sojourning with fear’; truly meek and gentle, never ‘overcome of evil, but overcoming evil with good’, thoroughly athirst for God, and continually panting after a renewal in His likeness? How thinly are they scattered over the earth whose souls are enlarged in love to all mankind, and who love God with all their strength, who have given Him their hearts, and desire nothing else in earth or heaven!

How few are those lovers of God and man, that spend their whole strength in doing good unto all men, and are ready to suffer all things, yea, death itself, to save one soul from eternal death!

5. But while so few are found in the way of life, and so many in the way of destruction, there is great danger lest the torrent of example should bear us away with them. Even a single example, if it be always in our sight, is apt to make much impression upon us, especially when it has nature on its side, when it falls in with our own inclinations. How great then must be the force of so numerous examples, continually before our eyes, and all conspiring, together with our own hearts, to carry us down the stream of nature! How difficult must it be to stem the tide, and to keep 'ourselves unspotted in the world'!

6. What heightens the difficulty still more is, that they are not the rude and senseless part of mankind, at least not these alone, who set us the example, who throng the downward way; but the polite, the well-bred, the genteel, the wise, the men who understand the world, the men of knowledge, of deep and various learning, the rational, the eloquent! These are all, or nearly all, against us. And how shall we stand against these? Do not their tongues drop manna, and have they not learned all the arts of soft persuasion?—and of reasoning too? for these are versed in all controversies, and strife of words. It is therefore a small thing with them to prove, that the way is *right*, because it is *broad*, that he who follows a multitude cannot do evil, but only he who will not follow them; that your way must be wrong, because it is *narrow*, and because there are so few that find it. These will make it clear to a demonstration, that evil is good, and good is evil, that the way of holiness is the way of destruction, and the way of the world the only way to heaven.

7. O how can unlearned and ignorant men maintain their cause against such opponents! And yet these are not all with whom they must contend, however unequal to the task:

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6. 'Rude,' i.e. rough, uncultured.

for there are many mighty, and noble, and powerful men, as well as wise, in the road that leadeth to destruction, and these have a shorter way of confuting, than that of reason and argument. They usually apply, not to the understanding, but to the fears, of any that oppose them,—a method that seldom fails of success, even where argument profits nothing, as lying level to the capacities of all men, for all can fear, whether they can reason or no. And all who have not a firm trust in God, a sure reliance both on His power and love, cannot but fear to give any disgust to those who have the power of the world in their hands. What wonder, therefore, if the example of these is a law to all who know not God?

8. Many rich are likewise in the broad way. And these apply to the hopes of men, and to all their foolish desires, as strongly and effectually as the mighty and noble to their fears. So that hardly can you hold on in the way of the kingdom, unless you are dead to all below, unless you are crucified to the world, and the world crucified to you, unless you desire nothing more but God.

9. For how dark, how uncomfortable, how forbidding, is the prospect on the opposite side! A strait gate, a narrow way! and few finding that gate, few walking in the way! Besides, even those few are not wise men, not men of learning or eloquence. They are not able to reason either strongly or clearly they cannot propose an argument to any advantage. They know not how to prove what they profess to believe, or to explain even what they say they experience. Surely such advocates as these will never recommend, but rather discredit, the cause they have espoused.

10. Add to this, that they are not noble, not honourable men: if they were, you might bear with their folly. They are men of no interest, no authority, of no account in the world. They are mean and base, low in life; and such as have no power, if they had the will, to hurt you. Therefore there is nothing at all to be feared from them, and there is nothing at all to hope for the greater part of them may say, 'Silver and gold have I none'; at least a very moderate share. Nay, some of them have scarce food to eat, or raiment to put on.



For this reason, as well as because their ways are not like those of other men, they are everywhere spoken against, are despised, have their names cast out as evil, are variously persecuted, and treated as the filth and offscouring of the world. So that both your fears, your hopes, and all your desires (except those which you have immediately from God), yea, all your natural passions, continually incline you to return into the broad way.

III. 1. Therefore it is, that our Lord so earnestly exhorts, 'Enter ye in at the strait gate.' Or (as the same exhortation is elsewhere expressed), 'Strive to enter in': *Ἀγωνίζεσθε εἰσελθεῖν*—'strive as in an agony'—'For many,' saith our Lord, 'shall seek to enter in,' indolently strive, 'and shall not be able.'

2. It is true, He intimates what may seem another reason for this, for their not being able to enter in, in the words which immediately follow these. For after He had said, 'Many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able,' He subjoins, 'When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without,' *ἄρξῃσθε ἔξω ἐστάναι*—rather, *ye stand without*; for *ἄρξῃσθε* seems to be only an elegant expletive—'and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; He shall answer and say unto you, I know you not—depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity' (Luke xiii. 24, &c.).

3. It may appear, upon a transient view of these words, that their delaying to seek at all, rather than their manner of seeking, was the reason why they were not able to enter in.

III. 1. The saying in Luke xiii. 24 was spoken in answer to a question, 'Are there few that are in the way of salvation?' Our Lord says, 'Agonize, strain every nerve, to enter; for many (at the last day) will seek to enter and will not be able to force their way in.' Probably a contrast is intended between 'agonizing' and merely 'seeking'; but 'agonize' does not mean (at any

rate in the modern sense) 'strive as in an agony'; rather 'strive as an athlete strives in a contest.'

2. The word 'begin' is not a mere expletive, elegant or otherwise; it implies the inception of a plan that is never consummated; the plea and effort of these people is cut short by the answer they receive from the lord of the house.

But it comes, in effect, to the same thing. They were, therefore, commanded to depart, because they had been 'workers of iniquity', because they had walked in the broad road; in other words, because they had not agonized to 'enter in at the strait gate.' Probably they did *seek*, before the door was shut, but that did not suffice: and they did *strive*, after the door was shut; but then it was too late.

4. Therefore strive ye now, in this your day, to 'enter in at the strait gate.' And in order thereto, settle it in your heart, and let it be ever uppermost in your thoughts, that if you are in a broad way, you are in the way that leadeth to destruction. If many go with you, as sure as God is true, both they and you are going to hell! If you are walking as the generality of men walk, you are walking to the bottomless pit! Are many wise, many rich, many mighty, or noble, travelling with you in the same way? By this token, without going any farther, you know it does not lead to life. Here is a short, a plain, an infallible rule, before you enter into particulars. In whatever profession you are engaged, you must be singular, or be damned! The way to hell has nothing singular in it, but the way to heaven is singularity all over. If you move but one step towards God, you are not as other men are. But regard not this. It is far better to stand alone, than to fall into the pit. Run, then, with patience the race which is set before thee, though thy companions therein are but few. They will not always be so. Yet a little while, and thou wilt 'come to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.'

5. Now, then, 'strive to enter in at the strait gate,' being penetrated with the deepest sense of the inexpressible danger your soul is in, so long as you are in a broad way,—so long as you are void of poverty of spirit, and all that inward religion, which the many, the rich, the wise, account madness. 'Strive to enter in'; being pierced with sorrow and shame

4. 'You must be singular or be damned!' A phrase that has become almost proverbial amongst Method-

ists; one of those epigrammatic flashes in which John Wesley excelled.

for having so long run on with the unthinking crowd, utterly neglecting, if not despising, that 'holiness without which no man can see the Lord.' Strive, as in an agony of holy fear, lest 'a promise being made you of entering into His rest,' even that 'rest which remaineth for the people of God,' you should nevertheless 'come short of it.' Strive, in all the fervour of desire, with 'groanings which cannot be uttered.' Strive by prayer without ceasing, at all times, in all places, lifting up your heart to God, and giving Him no rest, till you 'awake up after His likeness,' and are 'satisfied' with it.

6. To conclude. 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate,' not only by this agony of soul, of conviction, of sorrow, of shame, of desire, of fear, of unceasing prayer; but likewise by ordering thy conversation aright, by walking with all thy strength in all the ways of God, the way of innocence, of piety, and of mercy. Abstain from all appearance of evil; do all possible good to all men; deny thyself, thy own will, in all things, and take up thy cross daily. Be ready to cut off thy right hand, to pluck out thy right eye, and cast it from thee, to suffer the loss of goods, friends, health, all things on earth, so thou mayest enter into the kingdom of heaven.

6. Rather 'abstain from every kind of evil.' The Greek word translated 'appearance' means literally

'species,' 'kind'; not 'appearance.' This is a much-abused passage. See above, p. 468.

END OF VOL. I

